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UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

The Interim Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) is pleased to enclose its Information Kit on the Convention.

This information kit contains a general leaflet giving a broad perspective of the Convention, a booklet presenting the text of the Convention, and ten fact sheets. Enclosed you will also find the booklet "Down to Earth", a simplified guide to the Convention.

We hope you find these materials useful. Should you require additional copies, please write or fax to any of the addresses listed on the back of the kit.

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SECRETARIAT DE LA CONVENTION SUR LA DESERTIFICATION
INCD

CCD

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An introduction to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The Convention offers new hope in the struggle against desertification. Over the past two decades, the problem of land degradation in dryland regions has continued to worsen. The Convention promotes a fresh new approach to managing dryland ecosystems and – just as important – to managing development aid flows.

Desertification is caused by climate variability and human activities. In the past, drylands recovered easily following long droughts and dry periods. Under modern conditions, however, they tend to lose their biological and economic productivity quickly unless they are sustainably managed. Today drylands on every continent are being degraded by overcultivation, overgrazing, deforestation, and poor irrigation practices. Such overexploitation is generally caused by economic and social pressure, ignorance, war, and drought. (See fact sheet 2.)

Desertification undermines the land's productivity and contributes to poverty. Prime resources – fertile topsoil, vegetation cover, and healthy crops – are the first victims of desertification. The people themselves begin to suffer when food and water supplies become threatened. In the worst cases, they endure famine, mass migration, and colossal economic losses. Over 250 million people are directly affected by desertification, and some one thousand million (or one billion) are at risk. (See fact sheet 3.)

The Convention to Combat Desertification will be implemented through action programmes. These programmes are the core of the Convention. At the national level, they will address the underlying causes of desertification and drought and identify measures to prevent and reverse it. National programmes will be complemented by subregional and regional programmes, particularly when transboundary resources such as lakes and rivers are involved. Action programmes are detailed in the four regional implementation annexes to the Convention – Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. (See fact sheet 4.)

The Convention promises to dramatically reshape the international aid process. It seeks to engage donor nations and agencies and recipient countries in a new partnership. In the case of Africa, the respective roles of donors and recipients will be worked out in partnership agreements developed through a consultative process. The aim is to ensure that funding programmes are better coordinated, that funding is based on the needs of the affected countries, that donors can be sure their funds are well-spent, and that recipients obtain the maximum benefit from the sums available. (See fact sheet 5.)

Another radical departure is the strong emphasis on a "bottom-up" approach with strong local participation in decision-making. Traditionally, local communities have been relatively passive participants in development projects. Now the Convention puts them on an equal footing with other actors in the development process. Communities and their leaders, as well as non-governmental organizations, experts, and government officials, will work closely together to formulate action programmes. For this innovative and complicated process to work, awareness campaigns may be needed to inform people about the new opportunities presented by this Convention. (See fact sheet 6.)

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Science and technology are vital tools in the fight against desertification. Much remains to be learned about the causes and impacts of desertification, so international cooperation in scientific research and observation must be strengthened. Land degradation can be minimized with both new and traditional technologies, ranging from satellite monitoring to the terracing of steep hill slopes. Science and technology must respond to people's real needs, and the Convention encourages researchers around the world to combine their talents for this purpose. (See fact sheet 7.)

Financial resources need to be channeled and invested more efficiently. Most funding is raised domestically by the affected countries, but bilateral assistance programmes and international agencies also provide large sums. The Convention establishes a Global Mechanism to promote the mobilization of financial resources. Innovative funding sources, including debt swaps and private-sector financing, will also be encouraged. (See fact sheet 8.)

The Convention establishes a number of institutions and procedures for guiding international action. The supreme body of the Convention will be the Conference of the Parties (COP), which will include all ratifying governments. There will also be subordinate bodies for science and technology and for the promotion of funding. The Convention has been signed by over 100 countries, and it will enter into force three months after 50 countries have ratified it, probably in 1997. Until then, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee that drafted the Convention will continue to meet and, among other things, start carrying out its resolution on urgent action for Africa. (See fact sheet 9.)

Desertification is primarily a problem of sustainable development. It is a matter of poverty and human well-being, as well as preserving the environment. Social and economic issues, including food security, migration, and political stability, are closely linked to land degradation. So are such environmental issues as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies. The Convention emphasizes the need to coordinate research efforts and action programmes for combating desertification with these related concerns. (See fact sheet 10.)

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The causes of desertification

Desertification is the degradation of drylands. It involves the loss of biological or economic productivity and complexity in croplands, pastures, and woodlands. It is due mainly to climate variability and unsustainable human activities. The most commonly cited forms of unsustainable land use are overcultivation, overgrazing, deforestation, and poor irrigation practices. Seventy percent of the world's drylands (excluding hyper-arid deserts), or some 3,600 million hectares, are degraded. While drought is often associated with land degradation, it is a natural phenomenon that occurs when rainfall is significantly below normal recorded levels for a long time.

Drylands respond quickly to climatic fluctuations. By definition, drylands have limited freshwater supplies. Precipitation can vary greatly during the year. In addition to this seasonal variability, wide fluctuations occur over years and decades, frequently leading to drought. Over the ages, dryland ecology has become attuned to this variability in moisture; plants and animals can respond to it rapidly. For example, satellite imagery has shown that the vegetation boundary south of the Sahara can move by up to 200 km when a wet year is followed by a dry one, and vice versa.

People must also adjust to these natural fluctuations. The biological and economic resources of drylands, notably soil quality, freshwater supplies, vegetation, and crops, are easily damaged. People have learned to protect these resources with age-old strategies such as shifting agriculture and nomadic herding. However, in recent decades these strategies have become less practical due to changing economic and political circumstances, population growth, and a trend towards more settled communities. When land managers cannot or do not respond flexibly to climate variations, desertification is the result.

The relatively low priority given to environmental protection often leads to poor land management decisions. The overuse of land may result from specific economic conditions or from inappropriate land laws or customs. In many cases, unregulated access to land resources may lead some individuals to maximize their own gains by overexploiting the land at the expense of the community as a whole. Poor people, particularly poor women, often lack access to the best land, depending instead on the most fragile areas and resources. Their poverty may give them little alternative but to extract what they can from the scarce resources available to them, even though this degrades the land.

International economic forces can encourage people to overexploit their land. International trade patterns can lead to the short-term exploitation of local resources for export, leaving little profit at the community level for managing or restoring the land. Similarly, the development of an economy based on cash crops, or the imposition of taxes, can distort local markets and promote overexploitation of the land.

Ignorance, errors, and natural and man-made disasters can also contribute to land degradation. Ignorance of the natural environment played an

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important role in the U S during the infamous Dust Bowl of the 1930s; among other errors, during a time of drought Midwestern farmers used ploughs better suited for the more temperate latitudes of Western Europe. In recent decades, similar mistakes in the choice of policies or technologies have led to land degradation in many countries, both developed and developing. Disasters such as wars and national emergencies also destroy productive land by displacing its managers or causing heavy concentrations of migrants to overburden an area. Natural disasters such as floods and droughts can have a similar effect.

What role do increasing populations and population densities play? It is tempting to conclude that an expanding human population is the ultimate driving force behind desertification. More people in an area inevitably exert a greater pressure on that area's resources; sometimes this pressure is indirect, as when growing urban populations place demands on food production in uncrowded rural areas. But the causes of desertification are complex, and the relationship between two variables such as population and desertification is not clear-cut. For example, a decline in population can result in desertification since there may no longer be enough people to manage the land adequately. Many hillside terraces in Yemen have fallen into disrepair with the exodus of labour to neighbouring oil-rich countries. Examples can also be cited of areas that support large concentrations of people without much degradation, such as around the city of Kano in Nigeria.

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The consequences of desertification

Desertification reduces the land's resilience to natural climate variability. Soil, vegetation, freshwater supplies, and other dryland resources tend to be resilient. They can eventually recover from climatic disturbances, such as drought, and even from human-induced impacts, such as overgrazing. When land is degraded, however, this resilience is greatly weakened. This has both physical and socio-economic consequences.

Soil becomes less productive. Exposed and eroded topsoil can be blown away by the wind or washed away by rainstorms. The soil's physical structure and bio-chemical composition can change for the worse. Gullies and cracks may appear and vital nutrients can be removed by wind or water. If the water table rises due to inadequate drainage and poor irrigation practices, the soil can become waterlogged, and salts may build up. When soil is trampled and compacted by cattle, it can lose its ability to support plant growth and to hold moisture, resulting in increased evaporation and surface run-off.

Vegetation becomes damaged. The loss of vegetation cover is both a consequence and a cause of land degradation. Loose soil can sandblast plants, bury them, or leave their roots dangerously exposed. When pastures are overgrazed by too many animals, or by inappropriate types, edible plant species may be lost, allowing inedible species to invade.

Some of the consequences are borne by people living outside the immediately affected area. Degraded land may cause downstream flooding, reduced water quality, sedimentation in rivers and lakes, and siltation of reservoirs and navigation channels. It can also cause dust storms and air pollution, resulting in damaged machinery, reduced visibility, unwanted sediment deposits, and mental stress. Wind-blown dust can also worsen health problems, including eye infections, respiratory illnesses, and allergies. Dramatic increases in the frequency of dust storms were recorded during the Dust Bowl years in the U.S. in the Virgin Lands scheme area in the former USSR in the 1950s, and in the African Sahel during the 1970s and 1980s.

Food production is undermined. Desertification is considered a major global environmental issue largely because of the link between dryland degradation and food production. A nutritionally adequate diet for the world's growing population implies tripling food production over the next 50 years. This will be difficult to achieve even under favourable circumstances. If desertification is not stopped and reversed, food yields in many affected areas will decline. Malnutrition, starvation, and ultimately famine may result. The relationship between soil degradation and crop yields, however, is seldom straightforward. Productivity is affected by many different factors, such as the weather, disease and pests, farming methods, and external markets and other economic forces.

Desertification contributes to famine. Famine typically occurs in areas that also suffer from poverty, civil unrest, or war. Drought and land degradation often help to trigger a crisis, which is then made worse by poor food distribution and the inability to buy what is available.

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Desertification has enormous social costs. There is now increased awareness of the relationship between desertification, movements of people, and conflicts. In Africa, many people have become internally displaced or forced to migrate to other countries due to war, drought, and dryland degradation. The environmental resources in and around the cities and camps where these people settle come under severe pressure. Difficult living conditions and the loss of cultural identity further undermine social stability.

Desertification is a huge drain on economic resources. There is little detailed data on the economic losses resulting from desertification, although an unpublished World Bank study suggested that the depletion of natural resources in one Sahelian country was equivalent to 20% of its annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP). At the global level, it is estimated that the annual income foregone in the areas immediately affected by desertification amounts to approximately US$ 42 billion each year. The indirect economic and social costs suffered outside the affected areas, including the influx of "environmental refugees" and losses to national food production, may be much greater.

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Action programmes for combating desertification

The Convention to Combat Desertification will be implemented through national action programmes. Donors and affected countries will consult together on their respective roles in supporting these programmes, which will be developed with the full participation of local communities. Once the (significant) effort has been made to design an overall programme, it should be possible to initiate specific projects and activities within its framework with minimal paperwork and bureaucracy. Because programmes need to be adapted to particular regional circumstances, most of the specific requirements are described in the four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Northern Mediterranean. (Most of the following is taken from the highly detailed African annex.)

Programmes will start with long-term strategies and priorities. This is essential for providing continuity for long-term programming and for enabling governments to coordinate and administer their resources more effectively. Programmes will address the underlying causes of desertification and pay particular attention to preventive measures. They will consider all aspects of the problem – loss of agricultural productivity, reduced vegetation cover, soil erosion, socio-economic costs, and so on.

Local communities will play a key role in formulating programmes. They will also be active in designing and carrying out the resulting projects. Ongoing discussions and effective communication between the local and national levels will be vital. In this spirit, programmes must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate new initiatives and local adaptations as circumstances change. The end result should be an evolving programme that is "owned" by the very people who most depend on and understand the land.

National governments will commit themselves to providing an "enabling environment". Communities can only play a leading part in carrying out a programme if the national government removes obstacles and provides support. This will mean strengthening existing legislation and, when necessary, enacting new laws. For example, the government may adopt long-term policies encouraging greater decentralization of political power. Or it may introduce reforms granting people greater security of land tenure. Other important steps might be effective institutions for resolving conflicts over land and other resources, energy policies that encourage sustainable woodland management or the replacement of fuelwood by other energy sources, and economic reforms that promote investment and reduce poverty.

Action programmes will also specify the practical steps and measures to be taken. Specific measures to improve the economic environment could include creating financial instruments suited to local needs or introducing drought-resistant crops. Measures to conserve natural resources could involve diversifying energy sources away from the uncontrolled gathering of fuelwood. Other measures could include promoting research activities, drought contingency plans, and improved early warning systems.

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Efforts to combat desertification will be fully integrated with other development programmes. Reversing land degradation and alleviating poverty go hand in hand. Both involve improving food security, educating and training people, strengthening the capacity of local communities, and mobilizing non-governmental organizations. Similarly, because desertification affects and is affected by environmental concerns such as biological diversity and climate change, national action programmes need to be integrated with the programmes dealing with these issues.

Programmes will specify the resources available and those still needed. Part of the national budget must be clearly ear-marked for efforts to combat desertification and drought. The amount will vary according to national conditions and capabilities. At the same time, action programmes will seek to mobilize substantial financial resources from external sources. The requirements for technical cooperation will also be identified and prioritized.

Subregional and regional action programmes can help to harmonize and strengthen national programmes. They will be designed through consultations among the affected countries of each region (e.g. Africa) and sub-region (e.g. West Africa). In addition to boosting the efficiency of national programmes, they could promote joint programmes for the sustainable management of shared rivers and other cross-boundary ecosystems. They could also promote better cooperation among scientific and technical institutions.

Relevant parts of the Convention: Articles 1, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11, and Regional Implementation Annex for Africa Articles 1, 8, and 9.

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Partnership arrangements between donors and affected states

The Convention to Combat Desertification aims to improve the channeling and investment of official development aid. It recognizes that, in this era of tightening foreign aid budgets, development aid must be used as effectively as possible. Donors need to be confident that their contributions are well-spent. Recipients need to get the maximum benefit from the limited sums available.

The Convention expresses a consensus on the lessons of the past. Over the years, a great deal of insight has been gained on how to improve the process of development aid. For example, it is generally agreed that many past aid efforts suffered because they were "supply driven" by the financing agency, handled top-down by planners, or delivered without adequate coordination at all levels. These insights are recognized in the Convention.

Partnership arrangements will improve communication and coordination between donors and recipients. A vital part of the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa, these agreements will spell out explicitly the role of each partner, including donor agencies and governments, recipient governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This should help to harmonize efforts and maximize the impact of assistance. Partnership arrangements would be part of, or associated with, national action programmes. They could be used for many different purposes, such as mobilizing financial resources, reorienting assistance mechanisms to fit the Convention's approach, making inventories of funding sources, or developing new models of technological cooperation.

These agreements will be negotiated through a consultative process. Traditionally, consultations have been initiated and led by a donor agency. Under the Convention, however, consultations would be initiated and managed by the recipient country itself. They will be a continuous process. The resulting aid package should better serve the communities affected by desertification.

The consultative process will start within the affected country. The government could set up a coordinating body to act as a forum for consultations. To prepare the way it might want to promote the Convention through public awareness and training activities. It would then need to gain the participation of policymakers, community leaders, members of non-governmental organizations, and others responsible for the resulting activities. They would work together to evaluate past efforts, identify the country's needs, and set priorities. This participatory approach should result in a national action programme and a national consensus on how to work with international partners.

The recipient country must link up with international partners. These partners could include donor governments, regional development banks, and other

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international agencies. At the same time, donor partners, particularly developed country governments, could also develop a consultation process among themselves to structure their dialogue with recipient governments. This would help them to coordinate their policies, minimize overlaps and gaps, and evaluate and respond to requests for assistance.

Non-governmental organizations are granted an unprecedented role in this process. NGOs tend to be well-organized, close to the community level, and able to draw on a pool of skilled and experienced people. The Convention recognizes these strengths and makes specific provisions for NGOs to become active partners in these partnership arrangements.

Relevant parts of the Convention: Articles 10 and 11, plus Regional Implementation Annex for Africa Articles 6, 8, 9, 18, and 19.

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Participatory development: A bottom-up approach to combating desertification

What role do local communities have under the Convention to Combat Desertification? Traditional development planning has too often been "top-down". Outside experts start the process by defining objectives, activities, and expected outputs. Sometimes they visit the area to consult local authorities, inform them of the plan, and invite the community to help execute projects. The Convention turns this approach upside-down. The spirit and letter of the Convention reflect the philosophy of participatory development. Action programmes to combat desertification are now to originate at the local level and be based on genuine local participation.

Why is local participation in project planning so important? Over the past two decades, programmes designed with little reference to the perceptions and capacities of local people have often failed. Outsiders cannot necessarily identify local needs and priorities or figure out how best to meet them. Local communities have valuable experience and a special understanding of their own environment. When the responsibility for natural resource management is taken away from them, their use of land and other natural resources can become highly inefficient. The result is often land degradation. Participatory development recognizes the rights of local communities over their resources. They have a greater stake than anyone else in improving agricultural productivity while ensuring the long-term ecological balance of their fragile lands. In addition, local participation in planning and decision-making is essential for building local capacity.

Who should participate? Those most directly involved in the management, use, and benefits of a particular resource must be active participants. In the case of desertification, small farmers (both men and women), pastoralists, nomads, and other local land users are clearly vital to the process, as they have the most intimate contact with the land. Local leaders – village elders, traditional chiefs, representatives of community groups – and regional and national officials are also essential for mobilizing action. Technical experts, researchers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and voluntary associations are needed for the invaluable skills and expertise they can bring.

When should local participation start? At the very inception of a development initiative. To begin with, the objectives and planned activities should be identified through a participatory process. Once a programme has started, the participants will need to make regular reviews of the progress made and obstacles encountered. When each phase is completed, they should all be involved in evaluating its outcome and deciding on the next steps.

How should the process be initiated? The unique culture of each society shapes its patterns of decision-making and communication. Activities *must* originate at the local level, but sometimes additional encouragement may be needed to make people feel that they truly own the process of participatory development. NGOs may have a key role to play here. It may also be necessary for the government to delegate more decision-making authority to the local grassroots level.

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How can participation be strengthened? The participatory process is time-consuming and labour-intensive. There are no short-cuts. Awareness campaigns may be needed to educate the public about the Convention and about national action programmes. Agricultural extension services and NGOs can help to build up the community's capacity for "participatory programming". Local decision-making procedures may have to be adapted and strengthened. The community may have to go through a long learning and confidence-building process in order to take full advantage of the new resources it will now receive and manage directly. Due attention should also be paid to involving the more marginalized social groups.

How should local inputs be used at the regional and national levels? At the local level, discussions are likely to take place in informal groups as well as in organized meetings. The results need to be brought forward to the provincial level to ensure inter-village cooperation and the coordinated management of the regional environment. At the national level, all of this input will need to be translated into a national action programme. In addition, the national government will need to respond to local aspirations by providing an "enabling environment", including public infrastructure and technical assistance. It will also serve as the central contact point with foreign aid providers. Ideally, information and ideas will flow back and forth continuously between the various levels.

Relevant parts of the Convention: Articles 3, 5, 9 and 10, plus Regional Implementation Annex for Africa Articles 6 and 9.

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The role of science and technology

The Convention to Combat Desertification establishes a Committee on Science and Technology. Composed of government representatives, the Committee will advise the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP) on scientific and technological matters relevant to desertification and drought. In addition, ad hoc panels of government-nominated experts will provide information and advice on specific issues. These experts will be appointed by the COP on the recommendation of the Committee. They must have field experience and will represent a wide range of disciplines.

Success in combating desertification will require an improved understanding of its causes and impacts. There is still much to learn about the linkages between desertification and climate, soils, water, plants, animals, and, in particular, people. Key research areas include climatology and meteorology, soil sciences, hydrology, botany, zoology, ecology, and the social sciences. Action programmes for combating desertification will outline the research priorities for particular regions and subregions, reflecting local conditions. The Committee on Science and Technology will also advise on research priorities.

The Convention promotes international cooperation in scientific research and observation. The Parties to the Convention agree to integrate and coordinate the collection, analysis, and exchange of scientific data and information. They will also ensure the systematic observation of land degradation in an effort to better understand and assess the processes and effects of drought and desertification. The Convention stresses the need to coordinate such efforts with other related Conventions, in particular those dealing with climate change and biological diversity.

New technologies and know-how should be developed, transferred to affected countries, and adapted to local circumstances. Modern communications, satellite imagery, and genetic engineering are only some examples of modern tools that can help to combat desertification. Better weather forecasts and alerts can help to maintain or increase the land's productivity while improving food security and local living conditions. So too can new plant and animal varieties that are resistant to pests, diseases, and other dryland stresses. Photovoltaic cells and wind energy may reduce the consumption of scarce fuelwood and thus deforestation. For all these reasons, the Convention commits Parties to promoting technological cooperation. It calls for promoting and financing the transfer, acquisition, adaptation, and development of technologies that help to combat desertification or cope with its effects. These technologies should also be environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially acceptable.

Local and traditional technologies and know-how should be protected. People have been coping with the degradation of land and other natural resources at least since the advent of agriculture thousands of years ago. Many local populations have developed techniques for managing soil and water, domesticating plants and animals, and even forecasting the weather. Examples include the terracing of steep slopes in the Andes and Himalayas and the use of irrigation systems around the world since prehistoric times.

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Many of these traditional technologies are still in use and have proved their effectiveness over centuries. Too often, however, changes in economic, ecological, or cultural conditions have led people to abandon techniques that could still be valuable today. The Convention therefore states that traditional and local technologies and know-how should be protected. Inventories should be made of such technologies and information about them widely disseminated. Local populations should benefit directly from any commercial use of their techniques.

The Conference of the Parties will draw scientific and technology researchers into a global network to support the Convention. Under the leadership of the COP, the Committee on Science and Technology will survey and evaluate existing networks, institutions, agencies, and other bodies working on issues relevant to desertification. It will then promote a global research network committed to supporting the Convention. Scientists world-wide will be encouraged to contribute their know-how and research results to this international effort.

Affected developing countries need more scientific and technological capacity. They often suffer from a scarcity of domestic skills, expertise, libraries, and research centres. Many also need improved hydrological and meteorological services. The Convention encourages developed countries to support capacity-building efforts that will enable developing countries to combat desertification more effectively through science and technology.

Relevant parts of the Convention: Articles 8, 16, 17, 24, and 25.

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Financing action to combat desertification

How much money is needed to combat desertification? It is difficult to estimate just how much money will be needed to achieve the objective of the Convention to Combat Desertification. In large part, the cost will depend on the contents of the national action programmes through which affected countries will seek to implement the Convention. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that an effective 20-year global effort would cost US$ 10 - 22 billion per year. To put this estimate in perspective, UNEP also calculates that desertification currently causes affected countries to forego some US$ 42 billion in income per year.

How much money is being spent now? Neither national budgets nor statistics on international financial flows to developing countries give clear figures on spending to combat desertification. Producing such figures will be an important new task for the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP) and its Global Mechanism (see below).

What are the major sources of funding? The largest source of funds is the affected countries themselves. The largest *external* source for Africa is bilateral official development assistance provided on grant or concessional terms. Multilateral bank loans made on a commercial basis are the major external source of funds for Latin America and Asia. Foreign private investment is also important in these regions, although it has been largely untapped in Africa. The World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), regional development banks, and other international financial institutions also play a prominent role, as do United Nations organizations and agencies. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are another significant source, particularly in Africa.

How will action under the Convention be financed? Unlike its sister conventions on climate change and biological diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification does not establish a new financial "mechanism" to administer funds for Convention-related projects and activities. Instead, it emphasizes the need to mobilize substantial funding from existing sources and to rationalize and strengthen their management.

What financial commitments do the Parties make? Affected developing countries are to allocate adequate resources, given their circumstances and capabilities. Developed countries are to provide "substantial financial resources and other forms of support", including grants and concessional loans through both bilateral and multilateral channels. They also pledge to seek new and additional funding through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for activities to combat desertification which are also relevant to the GEF focal areas of biological diversity, climate change, and international waters. Furthermore, developed countries will encourage funding from private sector and non-governmental sources, including debt swaps and other innovative means to reduce external debt burdens. Over and above these commitments, any Party can voluntarily provide financial resources to affected developing countries.

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How will the flow of funding from donors to affected countries be coordinated in order to ensure maximum effectiveness? At its first session, probably some time in 1997, the Conference of the Parties will name an organization to house a "Global Mechanism". While the financial mechanisms for climate change and biodiversity actively administer funds, this Global Mechanism will only coordinate and facilitate. It will support efforts to boost the effectiveness and efficiency of how existing financial sources are used to combat desertification, and it will promote access to new and innovative financial resources. For example, the Mechanism will prepare an inventory of relevant cooperation programmes, offer advice on innovative financing methods and sources of financial assistance, help governments to coordinate cooperation activities at the national level, and provide interested Parties and organizations with information on funding patterns. It will operate under the authority and guidance of the COP and its operating procedures will be agreed between the COP and the host organization.

How will funding be channeled to the projects and activities where it is most needed? The Convention stresses that funds must be raised and then allocated using an integrated, "bottom-up" approach involving the full participation of local communities. The Regional Implementation Annex for Africa states that recipient governments will establish policies and procedures for channeling resources more effectively to groups at the local level. They will enable non-governmental organizations to assume an unprecedented role in ensuring that local communities obtain the external resources they need to carry out their own programmes. Governments will also provide a macroeconomic framework conducive to mobilizing financial resources and will ensure that the financial package is fully integrated into their overall national development programme. For its part, the COP will promote national desertification funds and other mechanisms for directing funds to the local level.

Relevant parts of the Convention: Articles 5, 6, 13, 20 and 21, plus Regional Implementation Annexes for Africa (Article 15), Latin America and the Caribbean (Article 6), and Asia (Article 6).

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Institutions and procedures of the Convention

The Convention to Combat Desertification was negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations. In June 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED – also known as the Rio Earth Summit) recommended that the United Nations General Assembly establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INCD) to prepare a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. The Committee was established in early 1993. It held five preparatory sessions before adopting the Convention on 17 June 1994 in Paris. The Convention was opened for signature in Paris on 14-15 October 1994.

The Convention will enter into force 90 days after it has been ratified by 50 countries, probably by 1997. While over 100 countries have now signed the Convention, it is not yet a binding international agreement. After the Convention has been adopted and signed by a government's representatives, it must be ratified by the national parliament or other designated authority. The government sends its instrument of ratification to the United Nations in New York, which acts as the Depository. Only after the 50th such ratification is received does the 90-day countdown begin for the Convention to enter into force. The first 50 ratifiers then become Parties and legally responsible for carrying out their treaty commitments, while other governments become Parties 90 days after they ratify. In the meantime, many of the Convention's provisions are being carried out voluntarily on the basis of a Committee resolution on urgent action in Africa.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) will oversee the implementation of the Convention. It is established by the Convention as the supreme decision-making body, and it will comprise all ratifying governments (and regional economic integration organizations, such as the European Union). Once the Convention enters into force, the COP will meet at least once a year for its first four sessions. One of its main functions will be to review reports submitted by the Parties detailing how they are carrying out their commitments. The COP will make recommendations on the basis of these reports. It also has the power to make amendments to the Convention or to launch negotiations for new annexes, such as additional regional implementation annexes. In this way, the COP can guide the Convention as global circumstances and national needs change. To assist the COP, the Convention provides for several other supporting bodies and allows the COP to establish additional ones if necessary.

The COP will be supported by a secretariat. Like other Convention secretariats, this one will service the COP by arranging its meetings, preparing documents, coordinating with other relevant bodies, compiling and transmitting information, and facilitating consultations and other actions. Affected developing countries should also be able to rely on the secretariat for information or advice on, for example, organizing their national consultation process.

The Committee on Science and Technology will advise the COP on scientific and technological matters. It will identify priorities for research and

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recommend ways of strengthening cooperation amongst researchers. It could also advise on such issues as joint research programmes for new technologies. The COP may set up ad hoc panels to assist with specialized issues. The panels would draw their members from a roster of government-nominated experts.

A Global Mechanism will help the COP to promote funding for Convention-related activities and programmes. This Mechanism will not raise or administer funds. Instead, it will encourage and assist donors, recipients, development banks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and others to mobilize funds and to channel them to where they are most needed. It will seek to promote greater coordination among existing sources of funding, and greater efficiency and effectiveness in the use of funds. The Global Mechanism will be under the authority of the COP, but the COP will identify another organization to house and operate it.

While only national governments that ratify the Convention can be members of the COP, other bodies and organizations can also participate. International conventions are, of course, legal agreements among sovereign countries. However, this Convention makes special provision for national and international agencies and qualified NGOs to attend the COP's meetings and to contribute to its work. NGOs have not only played a prominent role in the Convention process, but they continue to raise public awareness of the Convention and to lobby parliamentarians for its speedy ratification. For their part, international and regional organizations provide crucial information, expertise, contacts, and research and managerial capabilities.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee will continue to meet until the Convention enters into force. Comprising over 100 governments, the Committee meets about twice a year to develop recommendations for the first session of the COP. This should allow the COP to start implementing the Convention more quickly and effectively than it otherwise could. The Committee is being serviced by a Geneva-based interim secretariat which is administered by the United Nations Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD).

Relevant parts of the Convention: Parts IV, V, and VI.

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Desertification, global change, and sustainable development

The Convention to Combat Desertification cannot be viewed in isolation from other efforts to promote sustainable development. The Convention text refers frequently to sustainable development, climate change, biological diversity, water resources, energy sources, food security, and socio-economic factors. The interactions between these issues and desertification are often not fully understood, but they are clearly important. The Convention therefore emphasizes the need to coordinate desertification-related activities with the research efforts and response strategies inspired by these other concerns.

Efforts to combat desertification complement efforts to protect biological diversity. While many people tend to identify the issue of biodiversity with tropical rain forests, dryland ecosystems also contain a rich biota, including plant and animal species not found elsewhere. Many of humanity's most important food crops, such as barley and sorghum, originated in drylands. Though disappearing fast, indigenous varieties remain a vital resource for plant breeders because of their resistance to stresses such as disease. Dryland species also provide drugs, resins, waxes, oils, and other commercial products. For example, drylands supply one-third of the plant-derived drugs in the U.S. Finally, drylands provide critical habitats for wildlife, including large mammals and migratory birds. These habitats are particularly vulnerable to land degradation.

Land degradation affects the quantity and quality of freshwater supplies. Drought and desertification are associated with lower water levels in rivers, lakes, and aquifers. For example, unsustainable irrigation practices can dry the rivers that feed large lakes; the Aral Sea and Lake Chad have both seen their shorelines shrink dramatically in this way. Water crises are raising political tensions in many parts of the world, particularly where rivers and lakes are shared across borders. Land degradation is also a leading source of land-based pollution for the oceans, as polluted sediment and water washes down major rivers.

Natural climate variations can strongly affect drought patterns. Currently the best understood link between global climate variability and drought involves sea-surface temperature patterns. For example, the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, or ENSO, events, are associated with a warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific; they were especially frequent in the 1980s and early 1990s and occurred in tandem with widespread droughts in southern Africa and elsewhere. Research into such climate patterns is starting to improve seasonal rainfall predictions. Efforts to strengthen predictions are an important part of national action programmes to combat desertification and will help dryland farmers and herders to prepare better for droughts.

Climate change could worsen the effects of desertification. According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "countries with arid and semi-arid areas or areas liable to floods, drought and desertification ... are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change." Scientists cannot yet predict how rising atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases will affect the global rate of desertification.

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What they can predict is that changes in temperature, evaporation, and rainfall will vary from region to region. As a result, desertification is likely to be aggravated in some critical areas but eased in other places.

Desertification may temporarily affect climate change. Land degradation tends to reduce surface moisture. Because less water is available for the sun's energy to evaporate, more energy is left over for warming the ground and, as a result, the lower atmosphere. Meanwhile, wind erosion in drylands releases dust and other particulates into the atmosphere. By absorbing the sun's rays or reflecting them back out into space, they may help to cool the Earth's surface. However, the energy they absorb can heat the lower atmosphere and in this way reduce temperature differences between the atmosphere's vertical layers; this can lead to fewer rainshowers and thus drier land. Finally, the periodic burning of arid and semi-arid grasslands, often associated with unsustainable slash-and-burn agriculture, emits greenhouse gases. So does the unsustainable use of fuel-wood and charcoal, a major cause of land degradation. On the other hand, reforestation is likely to have a cooling effect and is also, of course, an important way to combat land degradation.

Desertification exacerbates poverty and political instability. It contributes significantly to water scarcity, famine, the internal displacement of people, migration, and social breakdown. This is a recipe for political instability, for tensions between neighboring countries, and even for armed conflict. Evidence is mounting that there is often a strong correlation between civil strife and conflict on the one hand and environmental factors such as desertification on the other.

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UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION CCD

The problem of land degradation

Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations.

Desertification does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts. It occurs because dryland ecosystems, which cover over one third of the world's land area, are extremely vulnerable to over-exploitation and inappropriate land use. Poverty, political instability, deforestation, overgrazing, and bad irrigation practices can all undermine the land's productivity.

Over 250 million people are directly affected by desertification. In addition, some one thousand million (or one billion) people in over one hundred countries are at risk. These people include many of the world's poorest, most marginalized, and politically weak citizens.

An innovative solution

Combating desertification is essential to ensuring the long-term productivity of inhabited drylands. Unfortunately, past efforts have too often failed, and around the world the problem of land degradation continues to worsen.

Recognizing the need for a fresh approach, over 100 governments have signed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. This Convention aims to promote effective action through innovative local programmes and supportive international partnerships.

The treaty acknowledges that the struggle to protect drylands will be a long one – there will be no quick fix. This is because the causes of desertification are many and complex, ranging from international trade patterns to unsustainable land management practices. Real and difficult changes will have to be made, both at the international and the local levels.

National action programmes...

Countries affected by desertification will implement the Convention by developing and carrying out national, sub-regional, and regional action programmes. Criteria for preparing these programmes are detailed in the treaty's four "regional implementation annexes": Africa (considered a priority because that is where desertification is most severe), Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean.

Drawing on past lessons, the Convention states that these programmes must adopt a democratic, bottom-up approach. They should emphasize popular participation and the creation of an "enabling environment" designed to allow local people to help themselves to reverse land degradation.

Of course, governments will remain responsible for creating this enabling environment. They must make politically sensitive changes, such as decentralizing authority, improving land-tenure systems, and empowering women, farmers, and pastoralists.

They should also permit non-governmental organizations to play a strong role in preparing and implementing the action programmes.

In contrast to many past efforts, these action programmes must be fully integrated with other national policies for sustainable development. They should be flexible and modified as circumstances change.

... and partnership agreements

The Convention's action programmes will be developed through consultations among affected countries, donors, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. This process will improve coordination and channel development assistance to where it can be most effective. It will also produce partnership agreements that spell out the respective contributions of both affected and donor states and of international organizations.

Developed countries are expected to encourage the mobilization of substantial funding for the action programmes.

They should also promote access to appropriate technologies, knowledge, and know-how.

The need for coordination among donors and recipients is stressed because each programme's various activities need to be complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Sustainable development

The Convention opens an important new phase in the battle against desertification, but it is just a beginning. In particular, governments will need to regularly review the action programmes. They will also focus on awareness-raising, education, and training, both in developing and developed countries.

Desertification can only be reversed through profound changes in local and international behavior. Step by step, these changes will ultimately lead to sustainable land use and food security for a growing world population. Combating desertification, then, is really just part of a much broader objective: the sustainable development of countries affected by drought and desertification.

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IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

TEXT WITH ANNEXES

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

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This booklet contains the text of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, which starts on page 4.

Preface

The international community has long recognized that desertification is a major economic, social, and environmental problem of concern to many countries in all regions of the world. In 1977, the United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) adopted a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (PACD). Unfortunately, despite this and other efforts, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) concluded in 1991 that the problem of land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas had intensified, although there were "local examples of success".

As a result, the question of how to tackle desertification was still a major concern for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in Rio de Janeiro. The Conference supported a new, integrated approach to the problem emphasizing action to promote sustainable development at the community level. It also called on the United Nations General Assembly to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INCD) to prepare, by June 1994, a Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. In December 1992, the General Assembly agreed by adopting Resolution 47/188.

Working to a tight schedule, the Committee completed its negotiations in five sessions. The Convention was adopted in Paris on 17 June 1994 and opened for signature there on 14-15 October 1994. Over 100 countries have signed the Convention so far, and it will enter into force 90 days after 50 countries have ratified it, most likely by 1997. Meanwhile, many of its provisions, particularly those relating to action programmes in Africa, are being implemented on the basis of a resolution adopted by the Committee.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

The Parties to this Convention,

Affirming that human beings in affected or threatened areas are at the centre of concerns to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought,

Reflecting the urgent concern of the international community, including States and international organizations, about the adverse impacts of desertification and drought,

Aware that arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas together account for a significant proportion of the Earth's land area and are the habitat and source of livelihood for a large segment of its population,

Acknowledging that desertification and drought are problems of global dimension in that they affect all regions of the world and that joint action of the international community is needed to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought,

Noting the high concentration of developing countries, notably the least developed countries, among those experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, and the particularly tragic consequences of these phenomena in Africa,

Noting also that desertification is caused by complex interactions among physical, biological, political, social, cultural and economic factors,

Considering the impact of trade and relevant aspects of international economic relations on the ability of affected countries to combat desertification adequately,

Convinced that sustainable economic growth, social development and poverty eradication are priorities of affected developing countries, particularly in Africa, and are essential to meeting sustainability objectives,

Mindful that desertification and drought affect sustainable development through their interrelationships with important social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, and those arising from migration, displacement of persons and demographic dynamics,

Appreciating the significance of the past efforts and experience of States and international organizations in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, particularly in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Desertification in 1977,

Realizing that, despite efforts in the past, progress in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought has not met expectations and that a new and more effective approach is needed at all levels within the framework of sustainable development,

Recognizing the validity and relevance of decisions adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, particularly of Agenda 21 and its chapter 12, which provide a basis for combating desertification,

Reaffirming in this light the commitments of developed countries as contained in paragraph 13 of chapter 33 of Agenda 21,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 47/188, particularly the priority in it prescribed for Africa, and all other relevant United Nations resolutions, decisions and programmes on desertification and drought, as well as relevant declarations by African countries and those from other regions,

Reaffirming the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development which states, in its Principle 2, that States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction,

Recognizing that national Governments play a critical role in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought and that progress in that respect depends on local implementation of action programmes in affected areas,

Recognizing also the importance and necessity of international cooperation and partnership in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought,

Recognizing further the importance of the provision to affected developing countries, particularly in Africa, of effective means, *inter alia* substantial financial resources, including new and additional funding,

and access to technology, without which it will be difficult for them to implement fully their commitments under this Convention,

Expressing concern over the impact of desertification and drought on affected countries in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus,

Stressing the important role played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the importance of ensuring the full participation of both men and women at all levels in programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought,

Emphasizing the special role of non-governmental organizations and other major groups in programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought,

Bearing in mind the relationship between desertification and other environmental problems of global dimension facing the international and national communities,

Bearing also in mind the contribution that combating desertification can make to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and other related environmental conventions,

Believing that strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought will be most effective if they are based on sound systematic observation and rigorous scientific knowledge and if they are continuously re-evaluated,

Recognizing the urgent need to improve the effectiveness and coordination of international cooperation to facilitate the implementation of national plans and priorities,

Determined to take appropriate action in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought for the benefit of present and future generations,

Have agreed as follows:

PART I

INTRODUCTION

Article 1
USE OF TERMS

For the purposes of this Convention:

(a) "desertification" means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities;

(b) "combating desertification" includes activities which are part of the integrated development of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas for sustainable development which are aimed at:

(i) prevention and/or reduction of land degradation;

(ii) rehabilitation of partly degraded land; and

(iii) reclamation of desertified land;

(c) "drought" means the naturally occurring phenomenon that exists when precipitation has been significantly below normal recorded levels, causing serious hydrological imbalances that adversely affect land resource production systems;

(d) "mitigating the effects of drought" means activities related to the prediction of drought and intended to reduce the vulnerability of society and natural systems to drought as it relates to combating desertification;

(e) "land" means the terrestrial bio-productive system that comprises soil, vegetation, other biota, and the ecological and hydrological processes that operate within the system;

(f) "land degradation" means reduction or loss, in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rainfed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns, such as:

(i) soil erosion caused by wind and/or water;

(ii) deterioration of the physical, chemical and biological or economic properties of soil; and

(iii) long-term loss of natural vegetation;

(g) "arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas" means areas, other than polar and sub-polar regions, in which the ratio of annual precipitation to potential evapotranspiration falls within the range from 0.05 to 0.65;

(h) "affected areas" means arid, semi-arid and/or dry sub-humid areas affected or threatened by desertification;

(i) "affected countries" means countries whose lands include, in whole or in part, affected areas;

(j) "regional economic integration organization" means an organization constituted by sovereign States of a given region which has competence in respect of matters governed by this Convention and has been duly authorized, in accordance with its internal procedures, to sign, ratify, accept, approve or accede to this Convention;

(k) "developed country Parties" means developed country Parties and regional economic integration organizations constituted by developed countries.

Article 2
OBJECTIVE

1. The objective of this Convention is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas.

2. Achieving this objective will involve long-term integrated strategies that focus simultaneously, in affected areas, on improved productivity of land, and the rehabilitation, conservation and sustainable management of land and water resources, leading to improved living conditions, in particular at the community level.

Article 3
PRINCIPLES

In order to achieve the objective of this Convention and to implement its provisions, the Parties shall be guided, *inter alia*, by the following:

(a) the Parties should ensure that decisions on the design and implementation of programmes to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought are taken with the participation of populations and local communities and that an enabling environment is created at higher levels to facilitate action at national and local levels;

(b) the Parties should, in a spirit of international solidarity and partnership, improve cooperation and coordination at subregional, regional and international levels, and better focus financial, human, organizational and technical resources where they are needed;

(c) the Parties should develop, in a spirit of partnership, cooperation among all levels of government, communities, non-governmental organizations and landholders to establish a better understanding of the nature and value of land and scarce water resources in affected areas and to work towards their sustainable use; and

(d) the Parties should take into full consideration the special needs and circumstances of affected developing country Parties, particularly the least developed among them.

PART II

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 4
GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

1. The Parties shall implement their obligations under this Convention, individually or jointly, either through existing or prospective bilateral and multilateral arrangements or a combination thereof, as appropriate, emphasizing the need to coordinate efforts and develop a coherent long-term strategy at all levels.

2. In pursuing the objective of this Convention, the Parties shall:
   (a) adopt an integrated approach addressing the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects of the processes of desertification and drought;
   (b) give due attention, within the relevant international and regional bodies, to the situation of affected developing country Parties with regard to international trade, marketing arrangements and debt with a view to establishing an enabling international economic environment conducive to the promotion of sustainable development;
   (c) integrate strategies for poverty eradication into efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;
   (d) promote cooperation among affected country Parties in the fields of environmental protection and the conservation of land and water resources, as they relate to desertification and drought;
   (e) strengthen subregional, regional and international cooperation;
   (f) cooperate within relevant intergovernmental organizations;
   (g) determine institutional mechanisms, if appropriate, keeping in mind the need to avoid duplication; and
   (h) promote the use of existing bilateral and multilateral financial mechanisms and arrangements that mobilize and channel substantial financial resources to affected developing country Parties in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.

3. Affected developing country Parties are eligible for assistance in the implementation of the Convention.

Article 5
OBLIGATIONS OF AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

In addition to their obligations pursuant to article 4, affected country Parties undertake to:

(a) give due priority to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, and allocate adequate resources in accordance with their circumstances and capabilities;

(b) establish strategies and priorities, within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies, to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

(c) address the underlying causes of desertification and pay special attention to the socio-economic factors contributing to desertification processes;

(d) promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of non-governmental organizations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought; and

(e) provide an enabling environment by strengthening, as appropriate, relevant existing legislation and, where they do not exist, enacting new laws and establishing long-term policies and action programmes.

Article 6
OBLIGATIONS OF DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES

In addition to their general obligations pursuant to article 4, developed country Parties undertake to:

(a) actively support, as agreed, individually or jointly, the efforts of affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, and the least developed countries, to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

(b) provide substantial financial resources and other forms of support to assist affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, effectively to develop and implement their own long-term plans and strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

(c) promote the mobilization of new and additional funding pursuant to article 20, paragraph 2 (b);

(d) encourage the mobilization of funding from the private sector and other non-governmental sources; and

(e) promote and facilitate access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how.

Article 7
PRIORITY FOR AFRICA

In implementing this Convention, the Parties shall give priority to affected African country Parties, in the light of the particular situation prevailing in that region, while not neglecting affected developing country Parties in other regions.

Article 8
RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS

1. The Parties shall encourage the coordination of activities carried out under this Convention and, if they are Parties to them, under other relevant international agreements, particularly the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, in order to derive maximum benefit from activities under each agreement while avoiding duplication of effort. The Parties shall encourage the conduct of joint programmes, particularly in the fields of research, training, systematic observation and information collection and exchange, to the extent that such activities may contribute to achieving the objectives of the agreements concerned.

2. The provisions of this Convention shall not affect the rights and obligations of any Party deriving from a bilateral, regional or international agreement into which it has entered prior to the entry into force of this Convention for it.

PART III

ACTION PROGRAMMES, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AND SUPPORTING MEASURES

Section 1: ACTION PROGRAMMES

Article 9

BASIC APPROACH

1. In carrying out their obligations pursuant to article 5, affected developing country Parties and any other affected country Party in the framework of its regional implementation annex or, otherwise, that has notified the Permanent Secretariat in writing of its intention to prepare a national action programme, shall, as appropriate, prepare, make public and implement national action programmes, utilizing and building, to the extent possible, on existing relevant successful plans and programmes, and subregional and regional action programmes, as the central element of the strategy to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. Such programmes shall be updated through a continuing participatory process on the basis of lessons from field action, as well as the results of research. The preparation of national action programmes shall be closely interlinked with other efforts to formulate national policies for sustainable development.

2. In the provision by developed country Parties of different forms of assistance under the terms of article 6, priority shall be given to supporting, as agreed, national, subregional and regional action programmes of affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, either directly or through relevant multilateral organizations or both.

3. The Parties shall encourage organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community and non-governmental organizations in a position to cooperate, in accordance with their mandates and capabilities, to support the elaboration, implementation and follow-up of action programmes.

Article 10
NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. The purpose of national action programmes is to identify the factors contributing to desertification and practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

2. National action programmes shall specify the respective roles of government, local communities and land users and the resources available and needed. They shall, *inter alia*:
   (a) incorporate long-term strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, emphasize implementation and be integrated with national policies for sustainable development;
   (b) allow for modifications to be made in response to changing circumstances and be sufficiently flexible at the local level to cope with different socio-economic, biological and geo-physical conditions;
   (c) give particular attention to the implementation of preventive measures for lands that are not yet degraded or which are only slightly degraded;
   (d) enhance national climatological, meteorological and hydrological capabilities and the means to provide for drought early warning;
   (e) promote policies and strengthen institutional frameworks which develop cooperation and coordination, in a spirit of partnership, between the donor community, governments at all levels, local populations and community groups, and facilitate access by local populations to appropriate information and technology;
   (f) provide for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organizations and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes; and
   (g) require regular review of, and progress reports on, their implementation.

3. National action programmes may include, *inter alia*, some or all of the following measures to prepare for and mitigate the effects of drought:
   (a) establishment and/or strengthening, as appropriate, of early warning systems, including local and national facilities and joint systems at the subregional and regional levels, and mechanisms for assisting environmentally displaced persons;

(b) strengthening of drought preparedness and management, including drought contingency plans at the local, national, subregional and regional levels, which take into consideration seasonal to interannual climate predictions;

(c) establishment and/or strengthening, as appropriate, of food security systems, including storage and marketing facilities, particularly in rural areas;

(d) establishment of alternative livelihood projects that could provide incomes in drought prone areas; and

(e) development of sustainable irrigation programmes for both crops and livestock.

4. Taking into account the circumstances and requirements specific to each affected country Party, national action programmes include, as appropriate, *inter alia*, measures in some or all of the following priority fields as they relate to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought in affected areas and to their populations: promotion of alternative livelihoods and improvement of national economic environments with a view to strengthening programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty and at ensuring food security; demographic dynamics; sustainable management of natural resources; sustainable agricultural practices; development and efficient use of various energy sources; institutional and legal frameworks; strengthening of capabilities for assessment and systematic observation, including hydrological and meteorological services, and capacity building, education and public awareness.

Article 11

SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

Affected country Parties shall consult and cooperate to prepare, as appropriate, in accordance with relevant regional implementation annexes, subregional and/or regional action programmes to harmonize, complement and increase the efficiency of national programmes. The provisions of article 10 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to subregional and regional programmes. Such cooperation may include agreed joint programmes for the sustainable management of transboundary natural resources, scientific and technical cooperation, and strengthening of relevant institutions.

Article 12

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Affected country Parties, in collaboration with other Parties and the international community, should cooperate to ensure the promotion of an enabling international environment in the implementation of the Convention. Such cooperation should also cover fields of technology transfer as well as scientific research and development, information collection and dissemination and financial resources.

Article 13

SUPPORT FOR THE ELABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. Measures to support action programmes pursuant to article 9 include, *inter alia*:
   (a) financial cooperation to provide predictability for action programmes, allowing for necessary long-term planning;
   (b) elaboration and use of cooperation mechanisms which better enable support at the local level, including action through non-governmental organizations, in order to promote the replicability of successful pilot programme activities where relevant;
   (c) increased flexibility in project design, funding and implementation in keeping with the experimental, iterative approach indicated for participatory action at the local community level; and
   (d) as appropriate, administrative and budgetary procedures that increase the efficiency of cooperation and of support programmes.
2. In providing such support to affected developing country Parties, priority shall be given to African country Parties and to least developed country Parties.

Article 14

COORDINATION IN THE ELABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. The Parties shall work closely together, directly and through relevant intergovernmental organizations, in the elaboration and implementation of action programmes.

2. The Parties shall develop operational mechanisms, particularly at the national and field levels, to ensure the fullest possible coordination among developed country Parties, developing country Parties and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in order to avoid duplication, harmonize interventions and approaches, and maximize the impact of assistance. In affected developing country Parties, priority will be given to coordinating activities related to international cooperation in order to maximize the efficient use of resources, to ensure responsive assistance, and to facilitate the implementation of national action programmes and priorities under this Convention.

Article 15
REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEXES

Elements for incorporation in action programmes shall be selected and adapted to the socio-economic, geographical and climatic factors applicable to affected country Parties or regions, as well as to their level of development. Guidelines for the preparation of action programmes and their exact focus and content for particular subregions and regions are set out in the regional implementation annexes.

Section 2:
TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

Article 16
INFORMATION COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND EXCHANGE

The Parties agree, according to their respective capabilities, to integrate and coordinate the collection, analysis and exchange of relevant short term and long term data and information to ensure systematic observation of land degradation in affected areas and to understand better and assess the

processes and effects of drought and desertification. This would help accomplish, *inter alia*, early warning and advance planning for periods of adverse climatic variation in a form suited for practical application by users at all levels, including especially local populations. To this end, they shall, as appropriate:

(a) facilitate and strengthen the functioning of the global network of institutions and facilities for the collection, analysis and exchange of information, as well as for systematic observation at all levels, which shall, *inter alia*:

  (i) aim to use compatible standards and systems;

  (ii) encompass relevant data and stations, including in remote areas;

  (iii) use and disseminate modern technology for data collection, transmission and assessment on land degradation; and

  (iv) link national, subregional and regional data and information centres more closely with global information sources;

(b) ensure that the collection, analysis and exchange of information address the needs of local communities and those of decision makers, with a view to resolving specific problems, and that local communities are involved in these activities;

(c) support and further develop bilateral and multilateral programmes and projects aimed at defining, conducting, assessing and financing the collection, analysis and exchange of data and information, including, *inter alia*, integrated sets of physical, biological, social and economic indicators;

(d) make full use of the expertise of competent intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly to disseminate relevant information and experiences among target groups in different regions;

(e) give full weight to the collection, analysis and exchange of socio-economic data, and their integration with physical and biological data;

(f) exchange and make fully, openly and promptly available information from all publicly available sources relevant to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought; and

(g) subject to their respective national legislation and/or policies, exchange information on local and traditional knowledge, ensuring adequate protection for it and providing appropriate return from the benefits derived from it, on an equitable basis and on mutually agreed terms, to the local populations concerned.

Article 17
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

1. The Parties undertake, according to their respective capabilities, to promote technical and scientific cooperation in the fields of combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought through appropriate national, subregional, regional and international institutions. To this end, they shall support research activities that:
   (a) contribute to increased knowledge of the processes leading to desertification and drought and the impact of, and distinction between, causal factors, both natural and human, with a view to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, and achieving improved productivity as well as sustainable use and management of resources;
   (b) respond to well defined objectives, address the specific needs of local populations and lead to the identification and implementation of solutions that improve the living standards of people in affected areas;
   (c) protect, integrate, enhance and validate traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices, ensuring, subject to their respective national legislation and/or policies, that the owners of that knowledge will directly benefit on an equitable basis and on mutually agreed terms from any commercial utilization of it or from any technological development derived from that knowledge;
   (d) develop and strengthen national, subregional and regional research capabilities in affected developing country Parties, particularly in Africa, including the development of local skills and the strengthening of appropriate capacities, especially in countries with a weak research base, giving particular attention to multidisciplinary and participative socio-economic research;
   (e) take into account, where relevant, the relationship between poverty, migration caused by environmental factors, and desertification;
   (f) promote the conduct of joint research programmes between national, subregional, regional and international research organizations, in both the public and private sectors, for the development of improved, affordable and accessible technologies for sustainable development through effective participation of local populations and communities; and

(g) enhance the availability of water resources in affected areas, by means of, *inter alia*, cloud-seeding.

2. Research priorities for particular regions and subregions, reflecting different local conditions, should be included in action programmes. The Conference of the Parties shall review research priorities periodically on the advice of the Committee on Science and Technology.

Article 18

TRANSFER, ACQUISITION, ADAPTATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY

1. The Parties undertake, as mutually agreed and in accordance with their respective national legislation and/or policies, to promote, finance and/or facilitate the financing of the transfer, acquisition, adaptation and development of environmentally sound, economically viable and socially acceptable technologies relevant to combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas. Such cooperation shall be conducted bilaterally or multilaterally, as appropriate, making full use of the expertise of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Parties shall, in particular:

(a) fully utilize relevant existing national, subregional, regional and international information systems and clearing-houses for the dissemination of information on available technologies, their sources, their environmental risks and the broad terms under which they may be acquired;

(b) facilitate access, in particular by affected developing country Parties, on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, taking into account the need to protect intellectual property rights, to technologies most suitable to practical application for specific needs of local populations, paying special attention to the social, cultural, economic and environmental impact of such technology;

(c) facilitate technology cooperation among affected country Parties through financial assistance or other appropriate means;

(d) extend technology cooperation with affected developing country Parties, including, where relevant, joint ventures, especially to sectors which foster alternative livelihoods; and

(c) take appropriate measures to create domestic market conditions and incentives, fiscal or otherwise, conducive to the development, transfer, acquisition and adaptation of suitable technology, knowledge, know-how and practices, including measures to ensure adequate and effective protection of intellectual property rights.

2. The Parties shall, according to their respective capabilities, and subject to their respective national legislation and/or policies, protect, promote and use in particular relevant traditional and local technology, knowledge, know-how and practices and, to that end, they undertake to:

(a) make inventories of such technology, knowledge, know-how and practices and their potential uses with the participation of local populations, and disseminate such information, where appropriate, in cooperation with relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;

(b) ensure that such technology, knowledge, know-how and practices are adequately protected and that local populations benefit directly, on an equitable basis and as mutually agreed, from any commercial utilization of them or from any technological development derived therefrom;

(c) encourage and actively support the improvement and dissemination of such technology, knowledge, know-how and practices or of the development of new technology based on them; and

(d) facilitate, as appropriate, the adaptation of such technology, knowledge, know-how and practices to wide use and integrate them with modern technology, as appropriate.

Section 3:
SUPPORTING MEASURES

Article 19
CAPACITY BUILDING, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

1. The Parties recognize the significance of capacity building – that is to say, institution building, training and development of relevant local and national capacities – in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. They shall promote, as appropriate, capacity-building:

   (a) through the full participation at all levels of local people, particularly at the local level, especially women and youth, with the cooperation of non-governmental and local organizations;

   (b) by strengthening training and research capacity at the national level in the field of desertification and drought;

   (c) by establishing and/or strengthening support and extension services to disseminate relevant technology methods and techniques more effectively, and by training field agents and members of rural organizations in participatory approaches for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources;

   (d) by fostering the use and dissemination of the knowledge, know-how and practices of local people in technical cooperation programmes, wherever possible;

   (e) by adapting, where necessary, relevant environmentally sound technology and traditional methods of agriculture and pastoralism to modern socio-economic conditions;

   (f) by providing appropriate training and technology in the use of alternative energy sources, particularly renewable energy resources, aimed particularly at reducing dependence on wood for fuel;

   (g) through cooperation, as mutually agreed, to strengthen the capacity of affected developing country Parties to develop and implement programmes in the field of collection, analysis and exchange of information pursuant to article 16;

   (h) through innovative ways of promoting alternative livelihoods, including training in new skills;

(i) by training of decision makers, managers, and personnel who are responsible for the collection and analysis of data for the dissemination and use of early warning information on drought conditions and for food production;

(j) through more effective operation of existing national institutions and legal frameworks and, where necessary, creation of new ones, along with strengthening of strategic planning and management; and

(k) by means of exchange visitor programmes to enhance capacity building in affected country Parties through a long-term, interactive process of learning and study.

2. Affected developing country Parties shall conduct, in cooperation with other Parties and competent intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate, an interdisciplinary review of available capacity and facilities at the local and national levels, and the potential for strengthening them.

3. The Parties shall cooperate with each other and through competent intergovernmental organizations, as well as with non-governmental organizations, in undertaking and supporting public awareness and educational programmes in both affected and, where relevant, unaffected country Parties to promote understanding of the causes and effects of desertification and drought and of the importance of meeting the objective of this Convention. To that end, they shall:

(a) organize awareness campaigns for the general public;

(b) promote, on a permanent basis, access by the public to relevant information, and wide public participation in education and awareness activities;

(c) encourage the establishment of associations that contribute to public awareness;

(d) develop and exchange educational and public awareness material, where possible in local languages, exchange and second experts to train personnel of affected developing country Parties in carrying out relevant education and awareness programmes, and fully utilize relevant educational material available in competent international bodies;

(e) assess educational needs in affected areas, elaborate appropriate school curricula and expand, as needed, educational and adult literacy programmes and opportunities for all, in particular for girls and women, on the identification, conservation and sustainable use and management of the natural resources of affected areas; and

(f) develop interdisciplinary participatory programmes integrating desertification and drought awareness into educational systems and in non-formal, adult, distance and practical educational programmes.

4. The Conference of the Parties shall establish and/or strengthen networks of regional education and training centres to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. These networks shall be coordinated by an institution created or designated for that purpose, in order to train scientific, technical and management personnel and to strengthen existing institutions responsible for education and training in affected country Parties, where appropriate, with a view to harmonizing programmes and to organizing exchanges of experience among them. These networks shall cooperate closely with relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to avoid duplication of effort.

Article 20
FINANCIAL RESOURCES

1. Given the central importance of financing to the achievement of the objective of the Convention, the Parties, taking into account their capabilities, shall make every effort to ensure that adequate financial resources are available for programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

2. In this connection, developed country Parties, while giving priority to affected African country Parties without neglecting affected developing country Parties in other regions, in accordance with article 7, undertake to:

(a) mobilize substantial financial resources, including grants and concessional loans, in order to support the implementation of programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

(b) promote the mobilization of adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional funding from the Global Environment Facility of the agreed incremental costs of those activities concerning desertification that relate to its four focal areas, in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Instrument establishing the Global Environment Facility;

(c) facilitate through international cooperation the transfer of technology, knowledge and know-how; and

(d) explore, in cooperation with affected developing country Parties, innovative methods and incentives for mobilizing and channelling resources, including those of foundations, non-governmental organizations and other private sector entities, particularly debt swaps and other innovative means which increase financing by reducing the external debt burden of affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa.

3. Affected developing country Parties, taking into account their capabilities, undertake to mobilize adequate financial resources for the implementation of their national action programmes.

4. In mobilizing financial resources, the Parties shall seek full use and continued qualitative improvement of all national, bilateral and multilateral funding sources and mechanisms, using consortia, joint programmes and parallel financing, and shall seek to involve private sector funding sources and mechanisms, including those of non-governmental organizations. To this end, the Parties shall fully utilize the operational mechanisms developed pursuant to article 11.

5. In order to mobilize the financial resources necessary for affected developing country Parties to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, the Parties shall:

(a) rationalize and strengthen the management of resources already allocated for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought by using them more effectively and efficiently, assessing their successes and shortcomings, removing hindrances to their effective use and, where necessary, reorienting programmes in light of the integrated long-term approach adopted pursuant to this Convention;

(b) give due priority and attention within the governing bodies of multilateral financial institutions, facilities and funds, including regional development banks and funds, to supporting affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, in activities which advance implementation of the Convention, notably action programmes they undertake in the framework of regional implementation annexes; and

(c) examine ways in which regional and subregional cooperation can be strengthened to support efforts undertaken at the national level.

6. Other Parties are encouraged to provide, on a voluntary basis, knowledge, know-how and techniques related to desertification and/or financial resources to affected developing country Parties.

7. The full implementation by affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, of their obligations under the Convention will be greatly assisted by the fulfilment by developed country Parties of their obligations under the Convention, including in particular those regarding financial resources and transfer of technology. In fulfilling their obligations, developed country Parties should take fully into account that economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first priorities of affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa.

Article 21
FINANCIAL MECHANISMS

1. The Conference of the Parties shall promote the availability of financial mechanisms and shall encourage such mechanisms to seek to maximize the availability of funding for affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, to implement the Convention. To this end, the Conference of the Parties shall consider for adoption *inter alia* approaches and policies that:
   (a) facilitate the provision of necessary funding at the national, subregional, regional and global levels for activities pursuant to relevant provisions of the Convention;
   (b) promote multiple-source funding approaches, mechanisms and arrangements and their assessment, consistent with article 20;
   (c) provide on a regular basis, to interested Parties and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, information on available sources of funds and on funding patterns in order to facilitate coordination among them;
   (d) facilitate the establishment, as appropriate, of mechanisms, such as national desertification funds, including those involving the participation of non-governmental organizations, to channel financial resources rapidly and efficiently to the local level in affected developing country Parties; and
   (e) strengthen existing funds and financial mechanisms at the subregional and regional levels, particularly in Africa, to support more effectively the implementation of the Convention.

2. The Conference of the Parties shall also encourage the provision, through various mechanisms within the United Nations system and through multilateral financial institutions, of support at the national, subregional and regional levels to activities that enable developing country Parties to meet their obligations under the Convention.

3. Affected developing country Parties shall utilize, and where necessary, establish and/or strengthen, national coordinating mechanisms, integrated in national development programmes, that would ensure the efficient use of all available financial resources. They shall also utilize participatory processes involving non-governmental organizations, local groups and the private sector, in raising funds, in elaborating as well as implementing programmes and in assuring access to funding by groups at the local level. These actions can be enhanced by improved coordination and flexible programming on the part of those providing assistance.

4. In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms, a Global Mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, including for the transfer of technology, on a grant basis, and/or on concessional or other terms, to affected developing country Parties, is hereby established. This Global Mechanism shall function under the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties and be accountable to it.

5. The Conference of the Parties shall identify, at its first ordinary session, an organization to house the Global Mechanism. The Conference of the Parties and the organization it has identified shall agree upon modalities for this Global Mechanism to ensure *inter alia* that such Mechanism:

   (a) identifies and draws up an inventory of relevant bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes that are available to implement the Convention;

   (b) provides advice, on request, to Parties on innovative methods of financing and sources of financial assistance and on improving the coordination of cooperation activities at the national level;

   (c) provides interested Parties and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations with information on available sources of funds and on funding patterns in order to facilitate coordination among them; and

   (d) reports to the Conference of the Parties, beginning at its second ordinary session, on its activities.

6. The Conference of the Parties shall, at its first session, make appropriate arrangements with the organization it has identified to house the Global Mechanism for the administrative operations of such Mechanism, drawing to the extent possible on existing budgetary and human resources.

7. The Conference of the Parties shall, at its third ordinary session, review the policies, operational modalities and activities of the Global Mechanism accountable to it pursuant to paragraph 4, taking into account the provisions of article 7. On the basis of this review, it shall consider and take appropriate action.

PART IV

INSTITUTIONS

Article 22
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

1. A Conference of the Parties is hereby established.

2. The Conference of the Parties is the supreme body of the Convention. It shall make, within its mandate, the decisions necessary to promote its effective implementation. In particular, it shall:
   (a) regularly review the implementation of the Convention and the functioning of its institutional arrangements in the light of the experience gained at the national, subregional, regional and international levels and on the basis of the evolution of scientific and technological knowledge;
   (b) promote and facilitate the exchange of information on measures adopted by the Parties, and determine the form and timetable for transmitting the information to be submitted pursuant to article 26, review the reports and make recommendations on them;
   (c) establish such subsidiary bodies as are deemed necessary for the implementation of the Convention;
   (d) review reports submitted by its subsidiary bodies and provide guidance to them;
   (e) agree upon and adopt, by consensus, rules of procedure and financial rules for itself and any subsidiary bodies;
   (f) adopt amendments to the Convention pursuant to articles 30 and 31;
   (g) approve a programme and budget for its activities, including those of its subsidiary bodies, and undertake necessary arrangements for their financing;
   (h) as appropriate, seek the cooperation of, and utilize the services of and information provided by, competent bodies or agencies, whether national or international, intergovernmental or non-governmental;
   (i) promote and strengthen the relationship with other relevant conventions while avoiding duplication of effort; and
   (j) exercise such other functions as may be necessary for the achievement of the objective of the Convention.

3. The Conference of the Parties shall, at its first session, adopt its own rules of procedure, by consensus, which shall include decision-making procedures for matters not already covered by decision-making procedures stipulated in the Convention. Such procedures may include specified majorities required for the adoption of particular decisions.

4. The first session of the Conference of the Parties shall be convened by the interim secretariat referred to in article 35 and shall take place not later than one year after the date of entry into force of the Convention. Unless otherwise decided by the Conference of the Parties, the second, third and fourth ordinary sessions shall be held yearly, and thereafter, ordinary sessions shall be held every two years.

5. Extraordinary sessions of the Conference of the Parties shall be held at such other times as may be decided either by the Conference of the Parties in ordinary session or at the written request of any Party, provided that, within three months of the request being communicated to the Parties by the Permanent Secretariat, it is supported by at least one third of the Parties.

6. At each ordinary session, the Conference of the Parties shall elect a Bureau. The structure and functions of the Bureau shall be determined in the rules of procedure. In appointing the Bureau, due regard shall be paid to the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and adequate representation of affected country Parties, particularly those in Africa.

7. The United Nations, its specialized agencies and any State member thereof or observers thereto not Party to the Convention, may be represented at sessions of the Conference of the Parties as observers. Any body or agency, whether national or international, governmental or non-governmental, which is qualified in matters covered by the Convention, and which has informed the Permanent Secretariat of its wish to be represented at a session of the Conference of the Parties as an observer, may be so admitted unless at least one third of the Parties present object. The admission and participation of observers shall be subject to the rules of procedure adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

8. The Conference of the Parties may request competent national and international organizations which have relevant expertise to provide it with information relevant to article 16, paragraph (g), article 17, paragraph 1 (c) and article 18, paragraph 2(b).

Article 23
PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

1. A Permanent Secretariat is hereby established.
2. The functions of the Permanent Secretariat shall be:
   (a) to make arrangements for sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies established under the Convention and to provide them with services as required;
   (b) to compile and transmit reports submitted to it;
   (c) to facilitate assistance to affected developing country Parties, on request, particularly those in Africa, in the compilation and communication of information required under the Convention;
   (d) to coordinate its activities with the secretariats of other relevant international bodies and conventions;
   (e) to enter, under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties, into such administrative and contractual arrangements as may be required for the effective discharge of its functions;
   (f) to prepare reports on the execution of its functions under this Convention and present them to the Conference of the Parties; and
   (g) to perform such other secretariat functions as may be determined by the Conference of the Parties.
3. The Conference of the Parties, at its first session, shall designate a Permanent Secretariat and make arrangements for its functioning.

Article 24
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. A Committee on Science and Technology is hereby established as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties to provide it with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. The Committee shall meet in conjunction with the ordinary sessions of the Conference of the Parties and shall be multidisciplinary and open to the participation of all Parties. It shall be composed of government representatives competent in the relevant fields of expertise. The Conference of the Parties shall decide, at its first session, on the terms of reference of the Committee.
2. The Conference of the Parties shall establish and maintain a roster of independent experts with expertise and experience in the relevant

fields. The roster shall be based on nominations received in writing from the Parties, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach and broad geographical representation.

3. The Conference of the Parties may, as necessary, appoint ad hoc panels to provide it, through the Committee, with information and advice on specific issues regarding the state of the art in fields of science and technology relevant to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. These panels shall be composed of experts whose names are taken from the roster, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach and broad geographical representation. These experts shall have scientific backgrounds and field experience and shall be appointed by the Conference of the Parties on the recommendation of the Committee. The Conference of the Parties shall decide on the terms of reference and the modalities of work of these panels.

Article 25
NETWORKING OF INSTITUTIONS, AGENCIES AND BODIES

1. The Committee on Science and Technology shall, under the supervision of the Conference of the Parties, make provision for the undertaking of a survey and evaluation of the relevant existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies willing to become units of a network. Such a network shall support the implementation of the Convention.

2. On the basis of the results of the survey and evaluation referred to in paragraph 1, the Committee on Science and Technology shall make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties on ways and means to facilitate and strengthen networking of the units at the local, national and other levels, with a view to ensuring that the thematic needs set out in articles 16 to 19 are addressed.

3. Taking into account these recommendations, the Conference of the Parties shall:
   (a) identify those national, subregional, regional and international units that are most appropriate for networking, and recommend operational procedures, and a time frame, for them; and
   (b) identify the units best suited to facilitating and strengthening such networking at all levels.

PART V

PROCEDURES

Article 26
COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION

1. Each Party shall communicate to the Conference of the Parties for consideration at its ordinary sessions, through the Permanent Secretariat, reports on the measures which it has taken for the implementation of the Convention. The Conference of the Parties shall determine the timetable for submission and the format of such reports.

2. Affected country Parties shall provide a description of the strategies established pursuant to article 5 and of any relevant information on their implementation.

3. Affected country Parties which implement action programmes pursuant to articles 9 to 15 shall provide a detailed description of the programmes and of their implementation.

4. Any group of affected country Parties may make a joint communication on measures taken at the subregional and/or regional levels in the framework of action programmes.

5. Developed country Parties shall report on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention.

6. Information communicated pursuant to paragraphs 1 to 4 shall be transmitted by the Permanent Secretariat as soon as possible to the Conference of the Parties and to any relevant subsidiary body.

7. The Conference of the Parties shall facilitate the provision to affected developing countries, particularly those in Africa, on request, of technical and financial support in compiling and communicating information in accordance with this article, as well as identifying the technical and financial needs associated with action programmes.

Article 27
MEASURES TO RESOLVE QUESTIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION

The Conference of the Parties shall consider and adopt procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions that may arise with regard to the implementation of the Convention.

Article 28
SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES

1. Parties shall settle any dispute between them concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention through negotiation or other peaceful means of their own choice.

2. When ratifying, accepting, approving, or acceding to the Convention, or at any time thereafter, a Party which is not a regional economic integration organization may declare in a written instrument submitted to the Depositary that, in respect of any dispute concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention, it recognizes one or both of the following means of dispute settlement as compulsory in relation to any Party accepting the same obligation:
   (a) arbitration in accordance with procedures adopted by the Conference of the Parties in an annex as soon as practicable;
   (b) submission of the dispute to the International Court of Justice.

3. A Party which is a regional economic integration organization may make a declaration with like effect in relation to arbitration in accordance with the procedure referred to in paragraph 2 (a).

4. A declaration made pursuant to paragraph 2 shall remain in force until it expires in accordance with its terms or until three months after written notice of its revocation has been deposited with the Depositary.

5. The expiry of a declaration, a notice of revocation or a new declaration shall not in any way affect proceedings pending before an arbitral tribunal or the International Court of Justice unless the Parties to the dispute otherwise agree.

6. If the Parties to a dispute have not accepted the same or any procedure pursuant to paragraph 2 and if they have not been able to settle their

dispute within twelve months following notification by one Party to another that a dispute exists between them, the dispute shall be submitted to conciliation at the request of any Party to the dispute, in accordance with procedures adopted by the Conference of the Parties in an annex as soon as practicable.

Article 29
STATUS OF ANNEXES

1. Annexes form an integral part of the Convention and, unless expressly provided otherwise, a reference to the Convention also constitutes a reference to its annexes.

2. The Parties shall interpret the provisions of the annexes in a manner that is in conformity with their rights and obligations under the articles of this Convention.

Article 30
AMENDMENTS TO THE CONVENTION

1. Any Party may propose amendments to the Convention.

2. Amendments to the Convention shall be adopted at an ordinary session of the Conference of the Parties. The text of any proposed amendment shall be communicated to the Parties by the Permanent Secretariat at least six months before the meeting at which it is proposed for adoption. The Permanent Secretariat shall also communicate proposed amendments to the signatories to the Convention.

3. The Parties shall make every effort to reach agreement on any proposed amendment to the Convention by consensus. If all efforts at consensus have been exhausted and no agreement reached, the amendment shall, as a last resort, be adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the Parties present and voting at the meeting. The adopted amendment shall be communicated by the Permanent Secretariat to the Depositary, who shall circulate it to all Parties for their ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

4. Instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession in respect of an amendment shall be deposited with the Depositary. An amendment adopted pursuant to paragraph 3 shall enter into force for

those Parties having accepted it on the ninetieth day after the date of receipt by the Depositary of an instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession by at least two thirds of the Parties to the Convention which were Parties at the time of the adoption of the amendment.

5. The amendment shall enter into force for any other Party on the ninetieth day after the date on which that Party deposits with the Depositary its instrument of ratification, acceptance or approval of, or accession to the said amendment.

6. For the purposes of this article and article 31, "Parties present and voting" means Parties present and casting an affirmative or negative vote.

Article 31
ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF ANNEXES

1. Any additional annex to the Convention and any amendment to an annex shall be proposed and adopted in accordance with the procedure for amendment of the Convention set forth in article 30, provided that, in adopting an additional regional implementation annex or amendment to any regional implementation annex, the majority provided for in that article shall include a two-thirds majority vote of the Parties of the region concerned present and voting. The adoption or amendment of an annex shall be communicated by the Depositary to all Parties.

2. An annex, other than an additional regional implementation annex, or an amendment to an annex, other than an amendment to any regional implementation annex, that has been adopted in accordance with paragraph 1, shall enter into force for all Parties to the Convention six months after the date of communication by the Depositary to such Parties of the adoption of such annex or amendment, except for those Parties that have notified the Depositary in writing within that period of their non-acceptance of such annex or amendment. Such annex or amendment shall enter into force for Parties which withdraw their notification of non-acceptance on the ninetieth day after the date on which withdrawal of such notification has been received by the Depositary.

3. An additional regional implementation annex or amendment to any regional implementation annex that has been adopted in accordance

with paragraph 1, shall enter into force for all Parties to the Convention six months after the date of the communication by the Depositary to such Parties of the adoption of such annex or amendment, except with respect to:

(a) any Party that has notified the Depositary in writing, within such six month period, of its non-acceptance of that additional regional implementation annex or of the amendment to the regional implementation annex, in which case such annex or amendment shall enter into force for Parties which withdraw their notification of non-acceptance on the ninetieth day after the date on which withdrawal of such notification has been received by the Depositary; and

(b) any Party that has made a declaration with respect to additional regional implementation annexes or amendments to regional implementation annexes in accordance with article 34, paragraph 4, in which case any such annex or amendment shall enter into force for such a Party on the ninetieth day after the date of deposit with the Depositary of its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with respect to such annex or amendment.

4. If the adoption of an annex or an amendment to an annex involves an amendment to the Convention, that annex or amendment to an annex shall not enter into force until such time as the amendment to the Convention enters into force.

Article 32
RIGHT TO VOTE

1. Except as provided for in paragraph 2, each Party to the Convention shall have one vote.

2. Regional economic integration organizations, in matters within their competence, shall exercise their right to vote with a number of votes equal to the number of their member States that are Parties to the Convention. Such an organization shall not exercise its right to vote if any of its member States exercises its right, and vice versa.

PART VI

FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 33
SIGNATURE

This Convention shall be opened for signature at Paris, on 14-15 October 1994, by States Members of the United Nations or any of its specialized agencies or that are Parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice and by regional economic integration organizations. It shall remain open for signature, thereafter, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York until 13 October 1995.

Article 34
RATIFICATION, ACCEPTANCE, APPROVAL AND ACCESSION

1. The Convention shall be subject to ratification, acceptance, approval or accession by States and by regional economic integration organizations. It shall be open for accession from the day after the date on which the Convention is closed for signature. Instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession shall be deposited with the Depositary.

2. Any regional economic integration organization which becomes a Party to the Convention without any of its member States being a Party to the Convention shall be bound by all the obligations under the Convention. Where one or more member States of such an organization are also Party to the Convention, the organization and its member States shall decide on their respective responsibilities for the performance of their obligations under the Convention. In such cases, the organization and the member States shall not be entitled to exercise rights under the Convention concurrently.

3. In their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, regional economic integration organizations shall declare the extent of

their competence with respect to the matters governed by the Convention. They shall also promptly inform the Depositary, who shall in turn inform the Parties, of any substantial modification in the extent of their competence.

4. In its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, any Party may declare that, with respect to it, any additional regional implementation annex or any amendment to any regional implementation annex shall enter into force only upon the deposit of its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with respect thereto.

Article 35
INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

The secretariat functions referred to in article 23 will be carried out on an interim basis by the secretariat established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 47/188 of 22 December 1992, until the completion of the first session of the Conference of the Parties.

Article 36
ENTRY INTO FORCE

1. The Convention shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after the date of deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

2. For each State or regional economic integration organization ratifying, accepting, approving or acceding to the Convention after the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after the date of deposit by such State or regional economic integration organization of its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

3. For the purposes of paragraphs 1 and 2, any instrument deposited by a regional economic integration organization shall not be counted as additional to those deposited by States members of the organization.

Article 37
RESERVATIONS

No reservations may be made to this Convention.

Article 38
WITHDRAWAL

1. At any time after three years from the date on which the Convention has entered into force for a Party, that Party may withdraw from the Convention by giving written notification to the Depositary.

2. Any such withdrawal shall take effect upon expiry of one year from the date of receipt by the Depositary of the notification of withdrawal, or on such later date as may be specified in the notification of withdrawal.

Article 39
DEPOSITARY

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall be the Depositary of the Convention.

Article 40
AUTHENTIC TEXTS

The original of the present Convention, of which the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, being duly authorized to that effect, have signed the present Convention.

DONE AT Paris, this 17th day of June one thousand nine hundred and ninety-four.

ANNEX I

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR AFRICA

Article 1
SCOPE

This Annex applies to Africa, in relation to each Party and in conformity with the Convention, in particular its article 7, for the purpose of combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought in its arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.

Article 2
PURPOSE

The purpose of this Annex, at the national, subregional and regional levels in Africa and in the light of its particular conditions, is to:

(a) identify measures and arrangements, including the nature and processes of assistance provided by developed country Parties, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention;

(b) provide for the efficient and practical implementation of the Convention to address conditions specific to Africa; and

(c) promote processes and activities relating to combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought within the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas of Africa.

Article 3
PARTICULAR CONDITIONS OF THE AFRICAN REGION

In carrying out their obligations under the Convention, the Parties shall, in the implementation of this Annex, adopt a basic approach that takes into consideration the following particular conditions of Africa:

(a) the high proportion of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas;

(b) the substantial number of countries and populations adversely affected by desertification and by the frequent recurrence of severe drought;

(c) the large number of affected countries that are landlocked;

(d) the widespread poverty prevalent in most affected countries, the large number of least developed countries among them, and their need for significant amounts of external assistance, in the form of grants and loans on concessional terms, to pursue their development objectives;

(e) the difficult socio-economic conditions, exacerbated by deteriorating and fluctuating terms of trade, external indebtedness and political instability, which induce internal, regional and international migrations;

(f) the heavy reliance of populations on natural resources for subsistence which, compounded by the effects of demographic trends and factors, a weak technological base and unsustainable production practices, contributes to serious resource degradation;

(g) the insufficient institutional and legal frameworks, the weak infrastructural base and the insufficient scientific, technical and educational capacity, leading to substantial capacity building requirements; and

(h) the central role of actions to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought in the national development priorities of affected African countries.

Article 4

COMMITMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF AFRICAN COUNTRY PARTIES

1. In accordance with their respective capabilities, African country Parties undertake to:

   (a) adopt the combating of desertification and/or the mitigation of the effects of drought as a central strategy in their efforts to eradicate poverty;

   (b) promote regional cooperation and integration, in a spirit of solidarity and partnership based on mutual interest, in programmes and activities to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought;

   (c) rationalize and strengthen existing institutions concerned with desertification and drought and involve other existing institutions,

as appropriate, in order to make them more effective and to ensure more efficient use of resources;

(d) promote the exchange of information on appropriate technology, knowledge, know-how and practices between and among them; and

(e) develop contingency plans for mitigating the effects of drought in areas degraded by desertification and/or drought.

2. Pursuant to the general and specific obligations set out in articles 4 and 5 of the Convention, affected African country Parties shall aim to:

(a) make appropriate financial allocations from their national budgets consistent with national conditions and capabilities and reflecting the new priority Africa has accorded to the phenomenon of desertification and/or drought;

(b) sustain and strengthen reforms currently in progress toward greater decentralization and resource tenure as well as reinforce participation of local populations and communities; and

(c) identify and mobilize new and additional national financial resources, and expand, as a matter of priority, existing national capabilities and facilities to mobilize domestic financial resources.

Article 5

COMMITMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES

1. In fulfilling their obligations pursuant to articles 4, 6 and 7 of the Convention, developed country Parties shall give priority to affected African country Parties and, in this context, shall:

(a) assist them to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought by, *inter alia*, providing and/or facilitating access to financial and/or other resources, and promoting, financing and/or facilitating the financing of the transfer, adaptation and access to appropriate environmental technologies and know-how, as mutually agreed and in accordance with national policies, taking into account their adoption of poverty eradication as a central strategy;

(b) continue to allocate significant resources and/or increase resources to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought; and

(c) assist them in strengthening capacities to enable them to improve their institutional frameworks, as well as their scientific and technical capabilities, information collection and analysis, and research and development for the purpose of combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought.

2. Other country Parties may provide, on a voluntary basis, technology, knowledge and know-how relating to desertification and/or financial resources, to affected African country Parties. The transfer of such knowledge, know-how and techniques is facilitated by international cooperation.

Article 6

STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. National action programmes shall be a central and integral part of a broader process of formulating national policies for the sustainable development of affected African country Parties.

2. A consultative and participatory process involving appropriate levels of government, local populations, communities and non-governmental organizations shall be undertaken to provide guidance on a strategy with flexible planning to allow maximum participation from local populations and communities. As appropriate, bilateral and multilateral assistance agencies may be involved in this process at the request of an affected African country Party.

Article 7

TIMETABLE FOR PREPARATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

Pending entry into force of this Convention, the African country Parties, in cooperation with other members of the international community, as appropriate, shall, to the extent possible, provisionally apply those provisions of the Convention relating to the preparation of national, subregional and regional action programmes.

Article 8
CONTENT OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. Consistent with article 10 of the Convention, the overall strategy of national action programmes shall emphasize integrated local development programmes for affected areas, based on participatory mechanisms and on integration of strategies for poverty eradication into efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. The programmes shall aim at strengthening the capacity of local authorities and ensuring the active involvement of local populations, communities and groups, with emphasis on education and training, mobilization of non-governmental organizations with proven expertise and strengthening of decentralized governmental structures.

2. National action programmes shall, as appropriate, include the following general features:
   (a) the use, in developing and implementing national action programmes, of past experiences in combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought, taking into account social, economic and ecological conditions;
   (b) the identification of factors contributing to desertification and/or drought and the resources and capacities available and required, and the setting up of appropriate policies and institutional and other responses and measures necessary to combat those phenomena and/or mitigate their effects; and
   (c) the increase in participation of local populations and communities, including women, farmers and pastoralists, and delegation to them of more responsibility for management.

3. National action programmes shall also, as appropriate, include the following:
   (a) measures to improve the economic environment with a view to eradicating poverty:
      (i) increasing incomes and employment opportunities, especially for the poorest members of the community, by:
         - developing markets for farm and livestock products;
         - creating financial instruments suited to local needs;
         - encouraging diversification in agriculture and the setting-up of agricultural enterprises; and
         - developing economic activities of a para-agricultural or non-agricultural type;

(ii) improving the long-term prospects of rural economies by the creation of:
- incentives for productive investment and access to the means of production; and
- price and tax policies and commercial practices that promote growth;

(iii) defining and applying population and migration policies to reduce population pressure on land; and

(iv) promoting the use of drought resistant crops and the application of integrated dry-land farming systems for food security purposes;

(b) measures to conserve natural resources:

(i) ensuring integrated and sustainable management of natural resources, including:
- agricultural land and pastoral land;
- vegetation cover and wildlife;
- forests;
- water resources; and
- biological diversity;

(ii) training with regard to, and strengthening, public awareness and environmental education campaigns and disseminating knowledge of techniques relating to the sustainable management of natural resources; and

(iii) ensuring the development and efficient use of diverse energy sources, the promotion of alternative sources of energy, particularly solar energy, wind energy and bio-gas, and specific arrangements for the transfer, acquisition and adaptation of relevant technology to alleviate the pressure on fragile natural resources;

(c) measures to improve institutional organization:

(i) defining the roles and responsibilities of central government and local authorities within the framework of a land use planning policy;

(ii) encouraging a policy of active decentralization, devolving responsibility for management and decision-making to local authorities, and encouraging initiatives and the assumption of responsibility by local communities and the establishment of local structures; and

(iii) adjusting, as appropriate, the institutional and regulatory framework of natural resource management to provide security of land tenure for local populations;

(d) measures to improve knowledge of desertification:
  (i) promoting research and the collection, processing and exchange of information on the scientific, technical and socio-economic aspects of desertification;
  (ii) improving national capabilities in research and in the collection, processing, exchange and analysis of information so as to increase understanding and to translate the results of the analysis into operational terms; and
  (iii) encouraging the medium and long term study of:
    - socio-economic and cultural trends in affected areas;
    - qualitative and quantitative trends in natural resources; and
    - the interaction between climate and desertification; and

(e) measures to monitor and assess the effects of drought:
  (i) developing strategies to evaluate the impacts of natural climate variability on regional drought and desertification and/or to utilize predictions of climate variability on seasonal to interannual time scales in efforts to mitigate the effects of drought;
  (ii) improving early warning and response capacity, efficiently managing emergency relief and food aid, and improving food stocking and distribution systems, cattle protection schemes and public works and alternative livelihoods for drought prone areas; and
  (iii) monitoring and assessing ecological degradation to provide reliable and timely information on the process and dynamics of resource degradation in order to facilitate better policy formulations and responses.

Article 9

PREPARATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION INDICATORS

Each affected African country Party shall designate an appropriate national coordinating body to function as a catalyst in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of its national action programme. This coordinating body shall, in the light of article 3 and as appropriate:

(a) undertake an identification and review of actions, beginning with a locally driven consultation process, involving local populations and communities and with the cooperation of local administrative authorities, developed country Parties and intergovernmental and non-

governmental organizations, on the basis of initial consultations of those concerned at the national level;

(b) identify and analyze the constraints, needs and gaps affecting development and sustainable land use and recommend practical measures to avoid duplication by making full use of relevant ongoing efforts and promote implementation of results;

(c) facilitate, design and formulate project activities based on interactive, flexible approaches in order to ensure active participation of the population in affected areas, to minimize the negative impact of such activities, and to identify and prioritize requirements for financial assistance and technical cooperation;

(d) establish pertinent, quantifiable and readily verifiable indicators to ensure the assessment and evaluation of national action programmes, which encompass actions in the short, medium and long terms, and of the implementation of such programmes; and

(e) prepare progress reports on the implementation of the national action programmes.

Article 10

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. Pursuant to article 4 of the Convention, African country Parties shall cooperate in the preparation and implementation of subregional action programmes for central, eastern, northern, southern and western Africa and, in that regard, may delegate the following responsibilities to relevant subregional intergovernmental organizations:

   (a) acting as focal points for preparatory activities and coordinating the implementation of the subregional action programmes;

   (b) assisting in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes;

   (c) facilitating the exchange of information, experience and know-how as well as providing advice on the review of national legislation; and

   (d) any other responsibilities relating to the implementation of subregional action programmes.

2. Specialized subregional institutions may provide support, upon request, and/or be entrusted with the responsibility to coordinate activities in their respective fields of competence.

Article 11
CONTENT AND PREPARATION OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

Subregional action programmes shall focus on issues that are better addressed at the subregional level. They shall establish, where necessary, mechanisms for the management of shared natural resources. Such mechanisms shall effectively handle transboundary problems associated with desertification and/or drought and shall provide support for the harmonious implementation of national action programmes. Priority areas for subregional action programmes shall, as appropriate, focus on:

(a) joint programmes for the sustainable management of transboundary natural resources through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, as appropriate;

(b) coordination of programmes to develop alternative energy sources;

(c) cooperation in the management and control of pests as well as of plant and animal diseases;

(d) capacity building, education and public awareness activities that are better carried out or supported at the subregional level;

(e) scientific and technical cooperation, particularly in the climatological, meteorological and hydrological fields, including networking for data collection and assessment, information sharing and project monitoring, and coordination and prioritization of research and development activities;

(f) early warning systems and joint planning for mitigating the effects of drought, including measures to address the problems resulting from environmentally induced migrations;

(g) exploration of ways of sharing experiences, particularly regarding participation of local populations and communities, and creation of an enabling environment for improved land use management and for use of appropriate technologies;

(h) strengthening of the capacity of subregional organizations to coordinate and provide technical services, as well as establishment, reorientation and strengthening of subregional centres and institutions; and

(i) development of policies in fields, such as trade, which have impact upon affected areas and populations, including policies for the coordination of regional marketing regimes and for common infrastructure.

Article 12

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

1. Pursuant to article 11 of the Convention, African country Parties shall jointly determine the procedures for preparing and implementing the regional action programme.

2. The Parties may provide appropriate support to relevant African regional institutions and organizations to enable them to assist African country Parties to fulfil their responsibilities under the Convention.

Article 13

CONTENT OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

The regional action programme includes measures relating to combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought in the following priority areas, as appropriate:

(a) development of regional cooperation and coordination of sub-regional action programmes for building regional consensus on key policy areas, including through regular consultations of sub-regional organizations;

(b) promotion of capacity building in activities which are better implemented at the regional level;

(c) the seeking of solutions with the international community to global economic and social issues that have an impact on affected areas taking into account article 4, paragraph 2 (b) of the Convention;

(d) promotion among the affected country Parties of Africa and its subregions, as well as with other affected regions, of exchange of information and appropriate techniques, technical know-how and relevant experience; promotion of scientific and technological cooperation particularly in the fields of climatology, meteorology, hydrology, water resource development and alternative energy sources;

coordination of sub-regional and regional research activities; and identification of regional priorities for research and development;

(e) coordination of networks for systematic observation and assessment and information exchange, as well as their integration into world wide networks; and

(f) coordination of and reinforcement of sub-regional and regional early warning systems and drought contingency plans.

Article 14
FINANCIAL RESOURCES

1. Pursuant to article 20 of the Convention and article 4, paragraph 2, affected African country Parties shall endeavour to provide a macroeconomic framework conducive to the mobilization of financial resources and shall develop policies and establish procedures to channel resources more effectively to local development programmes, including through non-governmental organizations, as appropriate.

2. Pursuant to article 21, paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Convention, the Parties agree to establish an inventory of sources of funding at the national, subregional, regional and international levels to ensure the rational use of existing resources and to identify gaps in resource allocation, to facilitate implementation of the action programmes. The inventory shall be regularly reviewed and updated.

3. Consistent with article 7 of the Convention, the developed country Parties shall continue to allocate significant resources and/or increased resources as well as other forms of assistance to affected African country Parties on the basis of partnership agreements and arrangements referred to in article 18, giving, *inter alia*, due attention to matters related to debt, international trade and marketing arrangements in accordance with article 4, paragraph 2 (b) of the Convention.

Article 15
FINANCIAL MECHANISMS

1. Consistent with article 7 of the Convention underscoring the priority to affected African country Parties and considering the particular situation prevailing in this region, the Parties shall pay special attention to the implementation in Africa of the provisions of article 21, paragraph 1 (d) and (e) of the Convention, notably by:
   (a) facilitating the establishment of mechanisms, such as national desertification funds, to channel financial resources to the local level; and
   (b) strengthening existing funds and financial mechanisms at the subregional and regional levels.
2. Consistent with articles 20 and 21 of the Convention, the Parties which are also members of the governing bodies of relevant regional and subregional financial institutions, including the African Development Bank and the African Development Fund, shall promote efforts to give due priority and attention to the activities of those institutions that advance the implementation of this Annex.
3. The Parties shall streamline, to the extent possible, procedures for channelling funds to affected African country Parties.

Article 16
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION

The Parties undertake, in accordance with their respective capabilities, to rationalize technical assistance to, and cooperation with, African country Parties with a view to increasing project and programme effectiveness by, *inter alia*:

(a) limiting the costs of support measures and backstopping, especially overhead costs; in any case, such costs shall only represent an appropriately low percentage of the total cost of the project so as to maximize project efficiency;
(b) giving preference to the utilization of competent national experts or, where necessary, competent experts from within the subregion and/or region, in project design, preparation and implementation, and to the building of local expertise where it does not exist; and

(c) effectively managing and coordinating, as well as efficiently utilizing, technical assistance to be provided.

Article 17

TRANSFER, ACQUISITION, ADAPTATION AND ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND TECHNOLOGY

In implementing article 18 of the Convention relating to transfer, acquisition, adaptation and development of technology, the Parties undertake to give priority to African country Parties and, as necessary, to develop with them new models of partnership and cooperation with a view to strengthening capacity building in the fields of scientific research and development and information collection and dissemination to enable them to implement their strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

Article 18

COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

1. African country Parties shall coordinate the preparation, negotiation and implementation of national, subregional and regional action programmes. They may involve, as appropriate, other Parties and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in this process.

2. The objectives of such coordination shall be to ensure that financial and technical cooperation is consistent with the Convention and to provide the necessary continuity in the use and administration of resources.

3. African country Parties shall organize consultative processes at the national, subregional and regional levels. These consultative processes may:
   (a) serve as a forum to negotiate and conclude partnership agreements based on national, subregional and regional action programmes; and
   (b) specify the contribution of African country Parties and other members of the consultative groups to the programmes and

identify priorities and agreements on implementation and evaluation indicators, as well as funding arrangements for implementation.

4. The Permanent Secretariat may, at the request of African country Parties, pursuant to article 23 of the Convention, facilitate the convocation of such consultative processes by:
   (a) providing advice on the organization of effective consultative arrangements, drawing on experiences from other such arrangements;
   (b) providing information to relevant bilateral and multilateral agencies concerning consultative meetings or processes, and encouraging their active involvement; and
   (c) providing other information that may be relevant in establishing or improving consultative arrangements.

5. The subregional and regional coordinating bodies shall, *inter alia*:
   (a) recommend appropriate adjustments to partnership agreements;
   (b) monitor, assess and report on the implementation of the agreed subregional and regional programmes; and
   (c) aim to ensure efficient communication and cooperation among African country Parties.

6. Participation in the consultative groups shall, as appropriate, be open to Governments, interested groups and donors, relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, relevant subregional and regional organizations, and representatives of relevant non-governmental organizations. Participants of each consultative group shall determine the modalities of its management and operation.

7. Pursuant to article 11 of the Convention, developed country Parties are encouraged to develop, on their own initiative, an informal process of consultation and coordination among themselves, at the national, subregional and regional levels, and, at the request of an affected African country Party or of an appropriate subregional or regional organization, to participate in a national, subregional or regional consultative process that would evaluate and respond to assistance needs in order to facilitate implementation.

Article 19
FOLLOW-UP ARRANGEMENTS

Follow-up of this Annex shall be carried out by African country Parties in accordance with the Convention as follows:

(a) at the national level, by a mechanism the composition of which should be determined by each affected African country Party and which shall include representatives of local communities and shall function under the supervision of the national coordinating body referred to in article 9;

(b) at the subregional level, by a multidisciplinary scientific and technical consultative committee, the composition and modalities of operation of which shall be determined by the African country Parties of the subregion concerned; and

(c) at the regional level, by mechanisms defined in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, and by an African Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee.

ANNEX II

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR ASIA

Article 1
PURPOSE

The purpose of this Annex is to provide guidelines and arrangements for the effective implementation of the Convention in the affected country Parties of the Asian region in the light of its particular conditions.

Article 2
PARTICULAR CONDITIONS OF THE ASIAN REGION

In carrying out their obligations under the Convention, the Parties shall, as appropriate, take into consideration the following particular conditions which apply in varying degrees to the affected country Parties of the region:

(a) the high proportion of areas in their territories affected by, or vulnerable to, desertification and drought and the broad diversity of these areas with regard to climate, topography, land use and socio-economic systems;

(b) the heavy pressure on natural resources for livelihoods;

(c) the existence of production systems, directly related to widespread poverty, leading to land degradation and to pressure on scarce water resources;

(d) the significant impact of conditions in the world economy and social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, migration, displaced persons and demographic dynamics;

(e) their expanding, but still insufficient, capacity and institutional frameworks to deal with national desertification and drought problems; and

(f) their need for international cooperation to pursue sustainable development objectives relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.

Article 3

FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. National action programmes shall be an integral part of broader national policies for sustainable development of the affected country Parties of the region.

2. The affected country Parties shall, as appropriate, develop national action programmes pursuant to articles 9 to 11 of the Convention, paying special attention to article 10, paragraph 2 (f). As appropriate, bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies may be involved in this process at the request of the affected country Party concerned.

Article 4

NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. In preparing and implementing national action programmes, the affected country Parties of the region, consistent with their respective circumstances and policies, may, *inter alia*, as appropriate:

   (a) designate appropriate bodies responsible for the preparation, coordination and implementation of their action programmes;

   (b) involve affected populations, including local communities, in the elaboration, coordination and implementation of their action programmes through a locally driven consultative process, with the cooperation of local authorities and relevant national and non-governmental organizations;

   (c) survey the state of the environment in affected areas to assess the causes and consequences of desertification and to determine priority areas for action;

   (d) evaluate, with the participation of affected populations, past and current programmes for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, in order to design a strategy and elaborate activities in their action programmes;

   (e) prepare technical and financial programmes based on the information derived from the activities in subparagraphs (a) to (d);

(f) develop and utilize procedures and benchmarks for evaluating implementation of their action programmes;

(g) promote the integrated management of drainage basins, the conservation of soil resources, and the enhancement and efficient use of water resources;

(h) strengthen and/or establish information, evaluation and follow up and early warning systems in regions prone to desertification and drought, taking account of climatological, meteorological, hydrological, biological and other relevant factors; and

(i) formulate in a spirit of partnership, where international cooperation, including financial and technical resources, is involved, appropriate arrangements supporting their action programmes.

2. Consistent with article 10 of the Convention, the overall strategy of national action programmes shall emphasize integrated local development programmes for affected areas, based on participatory mechanisms and on the integration of strategies for poverty eradication into efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. Sectoral measures in the action programmes shall be grouped in priority fields which take account of the broad diversity of affected areas in the region referred to in article 2 (a).

Article 5

SUBREGIONAL AND JOINT ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. Pursuant to article 11 of the Convention, affected country Parties in Asia may mutually agree to consult and cooperate with other Parties, as appropriate, to prepare and implement subregional or joint action programmes, as appropriate, in order to complement, and increase effectiveness in the implementation of, national action programmes. In either case, the relevant Parties may jointly agree to entrust subregional, including bilateral or national organizations, or specialized institutions, with responsibilities relating to the preparation, coordination and implementation of programmes. Such organizations or institutions may also act as focal points for the promotion and coordination of actions pursuant to articles 16 to 18 of the Convention.

2. In preparing and implementing subregional or joint action programmes, the affected country Parties of the region shall, *inter alia*, as appropriate:

   (a) identify, in cooperation with national institutions, priorities relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought which can better be met by such programmes, as well as relevant activities which could be effectively carried out through them;

   (b) evaluate the operational capacities and activities of relevant regional, subregional and national institutions;

   (c) assess existing programmes relating to desertification and drought among all or some parties of the region or subregion and their relationship with national action programmes; and

   (d) formulate in a spirit of partnership, where international cooperation, including financial and technical resources, is involved, appropriate bilateral and/or multilateral arrangements supporting the programmes.

3. Subregional or joint action programmes may include agreed joint programmes for the sustainable management of transboundary natural resources relating to desertification, priorities for coordination and other activities in the fields of capacity building, scientific and technical cooperation, particularly drought early warning systems and information sharing, and means of strengthening the relevant subregional and other organizations or institutions.

Article 6
REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Regional activities for the enhancement of subregional or joint action programmes may include, *inter alia*, measures to strengthen institutions and mechanisms for coordination and cooperation at the national, subregional and regional levels, and to promote the implementation of articles 16 to 19 of the Convention. These activities may also include:

(a) promoting and strengthening technical cooperation networks;

(b) preparing inventories of technologies, knowledge, know-how and practices, as well as traditional and local technologies and know-how, and promoting their dissemination and use;

(c) evaluating the requirements for technology transfer and promoting the adaptation and use of such technologies; and

(d) encouraging public awareness programmes and promoting capacity building at all levels, strengthening training, research and development and building systems for human resource development.

Article 7

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISMS

1. The Parties shall, in view of the importance of combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought in the Asian region, promote the mobilization of substantial financial resources and the availability of financial mechanisms, pursuant to articles 20 and 21 of the Convention.

2. In conformity with the Convention and on the basis of the coordinating mechanism provided for in article 8 and in accordance with their national development policies, affected country Parties of the region shall, individually or jointly:

   (a) adopt measures to rationalize and strengthen mechanisms to supply funds through public and private investment with a view to achieving specific results in action to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

   (b) identify international cooperation requirements in support of national efforts, particularly financial, technical and technological; and

   (c) promote the participation of bilateral and/or multilateral financial cooperation institutions with a view to ensuring implementation of the Convention.

3. The Parties shall streamline, to the extent possible, procedures for channelling funds to affected country Parties in the region.

Article 8

COOPERATION AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

1. Affected country Parties, through the appropriate bodies designated pursuant to article 4, paragraph 4 (a), and other Parties in the region, may, as appropriate, set up a mechanism for, *inter alia*, the following purposes:
   (a) exchange of information, experience, knowledge and know-how;
   (b) cooperation and coordination of actions, including bilateral and multilateral arrangements, at the subregional and regional levels;
   (c) promotion of scientific, technical, technological and financial cooperation pursuant to articles 5 to 7;
   (d) identification of external cooperation requirements; and
   (e) follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of action programmes.

2. Affected country Parties, through the appropriate bodies designated pursuant to article 4, paragraph 4 (a), and other Parties in the region, may also, as appropriate, consult and coordinate as regards the national, subregional and joint action programmes. They may involve, as appropriate, other Parties and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in this process. Such coordination shall, *inter alia*, seek to secure agreement on opportunities for international cooperation in accordance with articles 20 and 21 of the Convention, enhance technical cooperation and channel resources so that they are used effectively.

3. Affected country Parties of the region shall hold periodic coordination meetings, and the Permanent Secretariat may, at their request, pursuant to article 23 of the Convention, facilitate the convocation of such coordination meetings by:
   (a) providing advice on the organization of effective coordination arrangements, drawing on experience from other such arrangements;
   (b) providing information to relevant bilateral and multilateral agencies concerning coordination meetings, and encouraging their active involvement; and
   (c) providing other information that may be relevant in establishing or improving coordination processes.

ANNEX III

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Article 1
PURPOSE

The purpose of this Annex is to provide general guidelines for the implementation of the Convention in the Latin American and Caribbean region, in light of its particular conditions.

Article 2
PARTICULAR CONDITIONS OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGION

The Parties shall, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, take into consideration the following particular conditions of the region:

(a) the existence of broad expanses which are vulnerable and have been severely affected by desertification and/or drought and in which diverse characteristics may be observed, depending on the area in which they occur; this cumulative and intensifying process has negative social, cultural, economic and environmental effects which are all the more serious in that the region contains one of the largest resources of biological diversity in the world;

(b) the frequent use of unsustainable development practices in affected areas as a result of complex interactions among physical, biological, political, social, cultural and economic factors, including international economic factors such as external indebtedness, deteriorating terms of trade and trade practices which affect markets for agricultural, fishery and forestry products; and

(c) a sharp drop in the productivity of ecosystems being the main consequence of desertification and drought, taking the form of a decline in agricultural, livestock and forestry yields and a loss of

biological diversity; from the social point of view, the results are impoverishment, migration, internal population movements, and the deterioration of the quality of life; the region will therefore have to adopt an integrated approach to problems of desertification and drought by promoting sustainable development models that are in keeping with the environmental, economic and social situation in each country.

Article 3
ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. In conformity with the Convention, in particular its articles 9 to 11, and in accordance with their national development policies, affected country Parties of the region shall, as appropriate, prepare and implement national action programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought as an integral part of their national policies for sustainable development. Subregional and regional programmes may be prepared and implemented in accordance with the requirements of the region.

2. In the preparation of their national action programmes, affected country Parties of the region shall pay particular attention to article 10, paragraph 2 (f) of the Convention.

Article 4
CONTENT OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

In the light of their respective situations, the affected country Parties of the region may take account, *inter alia*, of the following thematic issues in developing their national strategies for action to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought, pursuant to article 5 of the Convention:

(a) increasing capacities, education and public awareness, technical, scientific and technological cooperation and financial resources and mechanisms;

(b) eradicating poverty and improving the quality of human life;

(c) achieving food security and sustainable development and management of agricultural, livestock-rearing, forestry and multipurpose activities;

(d) sustainable management of natural resources, especially the rational management of drainage basins;

(e) sustainable management of natural resources in high-altitude areas;

(f) rational management and conservation of soil resources and exploitation and efficient use of water resources;

(g) formulation and application of emergency plans to mitigate the effects of drought;

(h) strengthening and/or establishing information, evaluation and follow-up and early warning systems in areas prone to desertification and drought, taking account of climatological, meteorological, hydrological, biological, soil, economic and social factors;

(i) developing, managing and efficiently using diverse sources of energy, including the promotion of alternative sources;

(j) conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(k) consideration of demographic aspects related to desertification and drought; and

(l) establishing or strengthening institutional and legal frameworks permitting application of the Convention and aimed, *inter alia*, at decentralizing administrative structures and functions relating to desertification and drought, with the participation of affected communities and society in general.

Article 5

TECHNICAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION

In conformity with the Convention, in particular its articles 16 to 18, and on the basis of the coordinating mechanism provided for in article 7, affected country Parties of the region shall, individually or jointly:

(a) promote the strengthening of technical cooperation networks and national, subregional and regional information systems, as well as their integration, as appropriate, in worldwide sources of information;

(b) prepare an inventory of available technologies and know-how and promote their dissemination and use;

(c) promote the use of traditional technology, knowledge, know-how and practices pursuant to article 18, paragraph 2 (b), of the Convention;

(d) identify transfer of technology requirements; and

(e) promote the development, adaptation, adoption and transfer of relevant existing and new environmentally sound technologies.

Article 6
FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISMS

In conformity with the Convention, in particular its articles 20 and 21, on the basis of the coordinating mechanism provided for in article 7 and in accordance with their national development policies, affected country Parties of the region shall, individually or jointly:

(a) adopt measures to rationalize and strengthen mechanisms to supply funds through public and private investment with a view to achieving specific results in action to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

(b) identify international cooperation requirements in support of national efforts; and

(c) promote the participation of bilateral and/or multilateral financial cooperation institutions with a view to ensuring implementation of the Convention.

Article 7
INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

1. In order to give effect to this Annex, affected country Parties of the region shall:
   (a) establish and/or strengthen national focal points to coordinate action to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought; and
   (b) set up a mechanism to coordinate the national focal points for the following purposes:
      (i) exchanges of information and experience;
      (ii) coordination of activities at the subregional and regional levels;
      (iii) promotion of technical, scientific, technological and financial cooperation;
      (iv) identification of external cooperation requirements; and
      (v) follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of action programmes.

2. Affected country Parties of the region shall hold periodic coordination meetings and the Permanent Secretariat may, at their request, pursuant to article 23 of the Convention, facilitate the convocation of such coordination meetings, by:

(a) providing advice on the organization of effective coordination arrangements, drawing on experience from other such arrangements;

(b) providing information to relevant bilateral and multilateral agencies concerning coordination meetings, and encouraging their active involvement; and

(c) providing other information that may be relevant in establishing or improving coordination processes.

ANNEX IV

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

Article 1
PURPOSE

The purpose of this Annex is to provide guidelines and arrangements necessary for the effective implementation of the Convention in affected country Parties of the northern Mediterranean region in the light of its particular conditions.

Article 2
PARTICULAR CONDITIONS OF THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

The particular conditions of the northern Mediterranean region referred to in article 1 include:

(a) semi-arid climatic conditions affecting large areas, seasonal droughts, very high rainfall variability and sudden and high-intensity rainfall;

(b) poor and highly erodible soils, prone to develop surface crusts;

(c) uneven relief with steep slopes and very diversified landscapes;

(d) extensive forest coverage losses due to frequent wildfires;

(e) crisis conditions in traditional agriculture with associated land abandonment and deterioration of soil and water conservation structures;

(f) unsustainable exploitation of water resources leading to serious environmental damage, including chemical pollution, salinization and exhaustion of aquifers; and

(g) concentration of economic activity in coastal areas as a result of urban growth, industrial activities, tourism and irrigated agriculture.

Article 3

STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. National action programmes shall be a central and integral part of the strategic planning framework for sustainable development of the affected country Parties of the northern Mediterranean.

2. A consultative and participatory process, involving appropriate levels of government, local communities and non-governmental organizations, shall be undertaken to provide guidance on a strategy with flexible planning to allow maximum local participation, pursuant to article 10, paragraph 2 (f) of the Convention.

Article 4

OBLIGATION TO PREPARE NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND TIMETABLE

Affected country Parties of the northern Mediterranean region shall prepare national action programmes and, as appropriate, subregional, regional or joint action programmes. The preparation of such programmes shall be finalized as soon as practicable.

Article 5

PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

In preparing and implementing national action programmes pursuant to articles 9 and 10 of the Convention, each affected country Party of the region shall, as appropriate:

(a) designate appropriate bodies responsible for the preparation, coordination and implementation of its programme;

(b) involve affected populations, including local communities, in the elaboration, coordination and implementation of the programme through a locally driven consultative process, with the cooperation of local authorities and relevant non-governmental organizations;

(c) survey the state of the environment in affected areas to assess the causes and consequences of desertification and to determine priority areas for action;

(d) evaluate, with the participation of affected populations, past and current programmes in order to design a strategy and elaborate activities in the action programme;

(e) prepare technical and financial programmes based on the information gained through the activities in subparagraphs (a) to (d); and

(f) develop and utilize procedures and benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the programme.

Article 6
CONTENT OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

Affected country Parties of the region may include, in their national action programmes, measures relating to:

(a) legislative, institutional and administrative areas;

(b) land use patterns, management of water resources, soil conservation, forestry, agricultural activities and pasture and range management;

(c) management and conservation of wildlife and other forms of biological diversity;

(d) protection against forest fires;

(e) promotion of alternative livelihoods; and

(f) research, training and public awareness.

Article 7
SUBREGIONAL, REGIONAL AND JOINT ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. Affected country Parties of the region may, in accordance with article 11 of the Convention, prepare and implement subregional and/or regional action programmes in order to complement and increase the efficiency of national action programmes. Two or more affected country Parties of the region, may similarly agree to prepare a joint action programme between or among them.

2. The provisions of articles 5 and 6 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the preparation and implementation of subregional, regional and joint action programmes. In addition, such programmes may include the conduct of research and development activities concerning selected ecosystems in affected areas.

3. In preparing and implementing subregional, regional or joint action programmes, affected country Parties of the region shall, as appropriate:
   (a) identify, in cooperation with national institutions, national objectives relating to desertification which can better be met by such programmes and relevant activities which could be effectively carried out through them;
   (b) evaluate the operational capacities and activities of relevant regional, subregional and national institutions; and
   (c) assess existing programmes relating to desertification among Parties of the region and their relationship with national action programmes.

Article 8
COORDINATION OF SUBREGIONAL, REGIONAL AND JOINT ACTION PROGRAMMES

Affected country Parties preparing a subregional, regional or joint action programme may establish a coordination committee composed of representatives of each affected country Party concerned to review progress in combating desertification, harmonize national action programmes, make recommendations at the various stages of preparation and implementation of the subregional, regional or joint action programme, and act as a focal point for the promotion and coordination of technical cooperation pursuant to articles 16 to 19 of the Convention.

Article 9
NON-ELIGIBILITY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In implementing national, subregional, regional and joint action programmes, affected developed country Parties of the region are not eligible to receive financial assistance under this Convention.

Article 10
COORDINATION WITH OTHER SUBREGIONS AND REGIONS

Subregional, regional and joint action programmes in the northern Mediterranean region may be prepared and implemented in collaboration with those of other subregions or regions, particularly with those of the subregion of northern Africa.

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DOWN TO EARTH

A simplified guide to the
Convention to Combat Desertification, why it is necessary
and what is important and different about it.

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Published by
The Centre for Our Common Future
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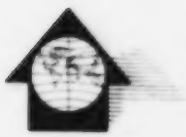
for the Convention to Combat Desertification

The Interim Secretariat for the Convention to Combat Desertification was established by the United Nations General Assembly to assist the Inter-governmental Negotiating Committee in the negotiation of the Convention and preparing for the first session of the Conference of the Parties. Address: Geneva Executive Center - 11-13 Chemin des Anemones, BP 76, 1219 Geneva, Switzerland - Tel: (41-22) 979 91 11 - Fax 979 90 30/31 - e-mail: secretariat.ncd@unep.ch

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) of the United Nations is a multilateral finance and development institution dedicated exclusively to the eradication of rural poverty. Through its Regular Programme and its Special Programme for Sub-Saharan African Countries Affected by Drought and Desertification, the Fund is committed to playing a major role in assisting developing countries and their dryland populations to unleash their own potential for sustainable development. Address: 107 Via del Serafico, 00142 Rome, Italy - Tel. (39-6) 545 91 - Fax (39-6) 504 34 63 - Telex 620330

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established as a programme of the UN General Assembly as a result of the 1992 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. UNEP is headquartered in Nairobi and has regional offices and specialised units around the world. UNEP is known as the "environmental conscience" of the United Nations system and plays a leading role in the UN's work on desertification. Address: Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya - Tel. (2542) 623283 - Fax (2542) 215615 - e-mail: dopcin@unep.no



The Centre for Our Common Future, a non-profit foundation committed to catalyzing change and inter-sectoral dialogue to achieve sustainable development by: disseminating information and raising awareness; encouraging and facilitating public participation in decision-making processes; providing advice and assistance on capacity-building, training and finance. *Down to Earth* is part of a continuing series of simplified versions of important UN documents published by the Centre. Address: 33, route de Valavran, 1293 Bellevue, Geneva, Switzerland Tel. (41-22) 774 45 30 - Fax 774 45 36 - e-mail: commonfuture@gn.apc.org

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Written by Geoffrey Lean

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Foreword

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is a major achievement of the international community.

Stemming from the United Nations Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention is an innovative document, which breaks new ground in international environmental law.

At the heart of the Convention is the commitment of affected countries to prepare and implement action programmes to prevent land degradation. The focus is on popular participation, and helping local people to help themselves prevent and reverse land degradation. Implementation of the Convention will be adapted to specific regional needs – in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Northern Mediterranean.

Co-ordination will be one of the keys to success. The Convention provides a framework in which developing countries, donor countries, inter-governmental institutions, and non-governmental organisations can join in a new partnership for progress. The commitment of donor countries to assist developing countries in combating desertification, is especially significant.

The people most severely affected by desertification are among the world's poorest. The Convention has the potential to reduce the vulnerability of affected populations by securing their environment, increasing food security, and creating new opportunities for alternative livelihoods. Successful implementation of the Convention would improve living conditions, and reduce poverty, while also helping to alleviate related problems such as migration, loss of plant and animal species, climate change, and the need for emergency aid to populations in crisis.

Public awareness and education are essential to success. I commend the Government of Switzerland, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Secretariat for the Convention for their efforts in helping to make the Convention accessible to a wider public. I am confident that this initiative will contribute to enhancing public interest in efforts to combat desertification, and promote sustainable development.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI

Secretary-General of the United Nations

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Foreword by the Secretary-General of the United Nations

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ERRATA

The corrections are typed in *bold italic*.

Aknowledgement page:

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established as a programme of the UN General Assembly as a result of the ***1972*** Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. UNEP is headquartered in Nairobi and has regional offices and specialised units around the world. UNEP is known as the "environmental conscience" of the United Nations system and plays a leading role in the UN's work on desertification.

On page 5:

Some 70 per cent of the ***3.2 billion*** hectares of drylands used for agriculture around the world are already degraded. Thus desertification now damages almost 30 per cent of the total land area of the world.

Just over a ***billion*** hectares of Africa, 73 per cent of its drylands, are moderately or severely affected by desertification. Another 1.1 ***billion*** hectares are affected in Asia.

On page 10:

After 13 months of difficult negotiations in five sessions in Nairobi, Geneva, New York and Paris – and against many observers' expectations – the ***United Nations*** Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (to give it its full name), was adopted on time on 17 June 1994 and opened for signature in Paris in October that year. By May 1995 a total of 105 countries had signed.

1 Losing Ground

It is no accident that our planet is called Earth. All terrestrial life depends on the fragile, friable crust of soil that coats the continents. Without it, living things would never have emerged from the oceans: there would be no plants, no crops, no forests, no animals – and no people.

This precious covering, the very flesh of the planet, is painfully slow to form, and can be destroyed terrifyingly fast. Just a single inch of soil can take centuries to build up but, if mistreated, it can be blown and washed away in a few seasons. And earth is now rapidly vanishing all over the planet that bears its name.

Each year, the Worldwatch Institute estimated, the continents lose 24 billion tonnes of topsoil. Over the last two decades as much has been lost worldwide as covers the entire cropland of the United States. And it is getting worse.

Nowhere is the crisis more acute than in the drylands which stretch across more than a third of the Earth's land surface. It is here – where the soils are especially fragile, vegetation is sparse and the climate is particularly unforgiving – that desertification takes hold. (Land degradation occurs everywhere, but is only defined as 'desertification' when it occurs in the drylands.) Some 70 per cent of the 5,200 million hectares of drylands used for agriculture around the world are already degraded. Thus desertification now damages almost 30 per cent of the total land area of the world.

Just over a million hectares of Africa, 73 per cent of its drylands, are moderately or severely affected by desertification. Another 1.4 million hectares are affected in Asia. But it is not just a problem for developing countries: the continent which has the highest proportion of its dryland severely or moderately desertified – 74 per cent – is North America. Five of the European Union's countries also suffer from it, while many of the most affected areas in Asia are in the former Soviet Union.

In all, more than 110 countries have drylands that are potentially at risk. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that desertification costs the world $42 billion a year. Africa alone loses some $9 billion a year.

The human cost is even higher. The livelihoods of more than a billion people – almost a fifth of the entire population of the globe – are now at risk. Over 135 million – equivalent to the populations of France, Italy, Switzerland and The Netherlands combined – may be in danger of being driven from their land. Nobody knows how many have already had to abandon their land as it turns to dust, but it certainly runs into millions: one-sixth of the population of Mali and Burkina Faso has already been uprooted in this way. Partly as a result of this, urban slums are swelling: between 1965 and 1988, the proportion of Mauritania's people living in the capital, Nouakchott, rose from 9 per cent to 41 per cent, while the proportion who were nomads fell from 73 per cent to 7 per cent.

While the newly landless follow their soil as it blows away in the wind, areas and countries far distant are affected by their migration. Desertification, for example, is one of the factors pushing Mexican immigrants over the border into the United States. Two-fifths of the people of the upper and middle regions of the Senegal Valley have already

emigrated: there are more people from the Bakel region in France than there are in the villages they left behind. Yet, given the chance, people would prefer to stay.

Desertification has played some part in sparking off 10 of the armed conflicts currently in progress in arid lands. It contributes to political instability, starvation and social breakdown in such troublespots as Somalia, and causes huge amounts of money to be spent in disaster relief and humanitarian aid. And it aggravates such gathering environmental crises as global warming and the loss of biodiversity.

In a sense, desertification is a misleading term. To some, it suggests that the world's deserts are spreading, extending their sands over more and more fertile land. It is true that the borders of the deserts expand and shrink cyclically with fluctuations in the climate and rainfall, but this is a different matter. Desertification – an ugly word for an ugly process – is more like a skin disease. Patches of degraded land erupt separately, sometimes as far as thousands of kilometres away from the nearest desert. Gradually the patches spread and join together, creating desert-like conditions.

The Convention to Combat Desertification adopts the definition of desertification agreed by the world's leaders at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 – which blames both climatic variations and human activities. It adds that "desertification is caused by complex interactions among physical, biological, political, social, cultural and economic factors."

Drought often aggravates it or triggers it off. But four human activities are usually the most immediate causes. Overcultivation exhausts the soil. Overgrazing removes the covering of vegetation that protects it from erosion. Deforestation cuts the trees that bind the soil to the land. And poorly drained irrigation turns cropland salty, desertifying some 500,000 hectares each year – about the same amount as is newly irrigated annually.

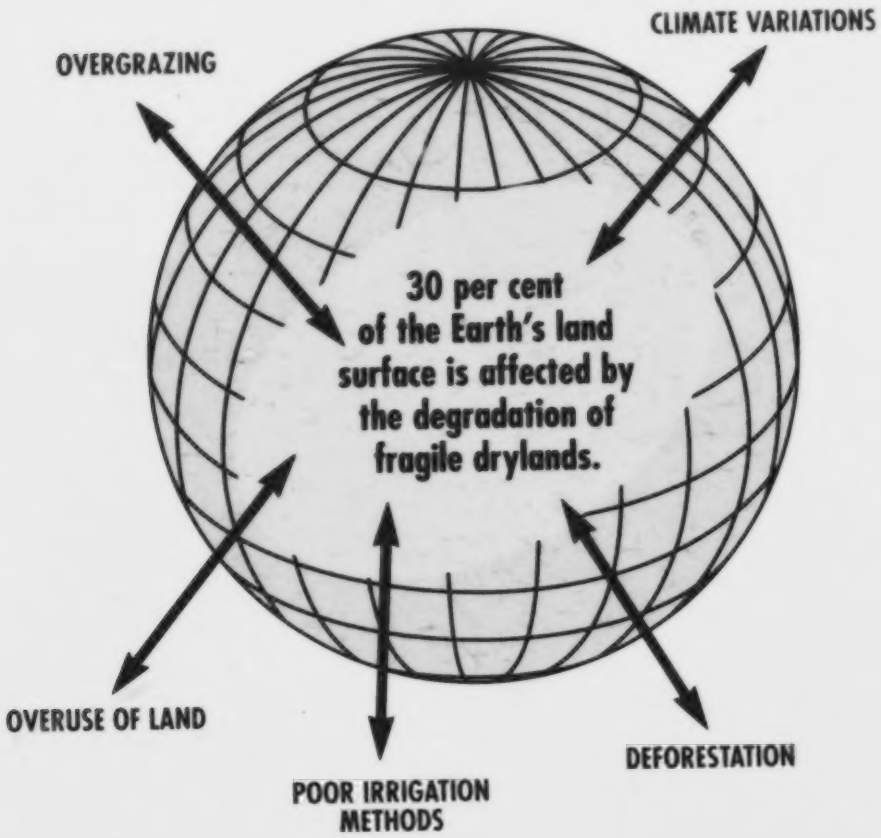
In the past the people of the drylands have often been blamed for destroying their own livelihoods by overusing their land and felling trees. But as the Convention recognises, there are usually deeper underlying causes that give them no alternative. Poverty is principal among them. It drives the poor to get as much out of the land as possible to feed their families in the short-term, even though they are thereby foreclosing their long-term futures.

The poor of the drylands often have little say in determining their fate. They are often marginalised even in their own countries, without rights to their land, and with little influence in national or regional politics. They are among the least visible people in the world, whether economically, politically or geographically – and women, who are usually worst affected by desertification, have the least influence of all, even in their own societies. They are highly vulnerable to the vagaries both of the weather and of national and global economies. Drought can push them into disaster, but so can good rains which sometimes produce surpluses of food, and drive down prices.

As population and the demand for agricultural production increase, traditional systems of managing the land are collapsing – and this is aggravated by the adoption of new practices, often monocultures. So more and more of the good land is being pressed into service, without proper attention to conservation, and poor farmers and pastoralists are forced onto marginal land.

In the past, development planners have too often tended to ignore the people of the drylands. But the poor know more than anyone else about the fragile ecosystems from which they have wrested a living for so long. They should be the key to combating desertification.

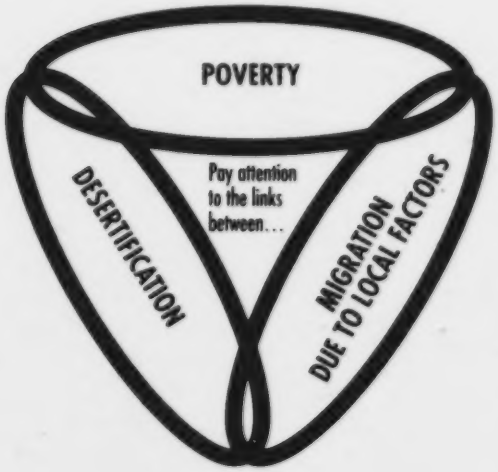
The Convention acknowledges this and recognises, as was underlined at the 1995 Copenhagen Summit on Social Development, that development must be human-orientated if it is to be sustainable. It breaks new ground and embraces a "bottom-up" approach, insisting that local people must be fully involved in deciding how to tackle the problem of desertification and that their poverty should be addressed. It thus simultaneously offers hope that desertification can be halted and rolled back and that the incomes and self-respect of some of the poorest people on Planet Earth can be improved, encouraging them to remain on their land. It offers the best, and possibly the last, chance of effectively addressing the multiple, interlocking crises of desertification.


CLIMATE VARIATIONS
OVERGRAZING
30 per cent of the Earth's land surface is affected by the degradation of fragile drylands.
OVERUSE OF LAND
DEFORESTATION
POOR IRRIGATION METHODS

2 What is Desertification?

Are the deserts advancing? Despite some rhetoric at times of crisis, the sands are not steadily spreading over neighbouring land. Deserts may seem to expand when the rains are poor over a long period, but they usually retreat again with good rainfall.

So, is everything alright? No. Land degradation is continuing and increasing at an alarming pace, seriously eroding the world's precious store of productive land. When it happens in the world's drylands it often creates desert-like conditions and is called "desertification". This process happens piecemeal as different areas of degraded land spread and merge together, rather than through advancing desert.



Is it just an act of God, or the weather? No. Drought is part of the cause of desertification and certainly makes things worse. But essentially it is a man-made problem. It arises from placing too much pressure on the land.

Is it only a problem for the poor in developing countries? No. One billion of the poorest and most marginised people of the earth – who live in the most vulnerable areas – may be the most severely affected by desertification. But it has other victims too. Some 18 developed countries suffer from desertification. And developed countries as a whole – and more favoured areas of developing countries – are already being affected indirectly as people migrate to them after being unable to live off their degraded land. Desertification provides one of the most graphic examples of how poverty anywhere endangers prosperity and sustainability everywhere.

So, what is Desertification? The definition agreed by the world's leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit and adopted by the Convention is: "land degradation in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities."

3 The Road to Paris

Land degradation is as old as civilisation itself, stretching from the plains of China to the peaks of the Inca empire. The world's first ever written story, a Sumerian epic, tells how a man felled the forests of Mesopotamia, bringing down a curse. The ancient Sumerians failed to heed the parable and went on cutting the trees. As early as 2000 BC their literature carries evocative descriptions of desertification. Their great city-state of Uruk, which once contained 50,000 people and produced crop yields comparable to those of North America today, is now just a bump in the sand.

Plato wrote of Attica in the 4th century BC: "our land, compared to what it was, is like the skeleton of a body wasted by disease." The Roman Empire's breadbasket in North Africa, where once 600 cities flourished, is now a desert. Christopher Columbus said he had "never beheld so fair a thing" as the forests he found cloaking the hills of Haiti: those same hills are now barren and eroded.

Yet it is by no means all a history of destruction. The people of the drylands generally evolved sophisticated ways of living off their fragile soils without overexploiting them. The people of the Algerian steppe, for example, roamed as nomads over its 20 million hectares to get the best advantage from the changing seasons and climatic variations, while minimising damage to the land, sharing resources with settled farmers to the north and the people of the oases to the south.

The first determined international effort to combat desertification began at the end of the great Sahelian drought and famine of 1968-1974 in which over 200,000 people and millions of their animals died. The United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office was set up in 1973, originally to assist nine drought-prone countries in West Africa, though its activities spread. Assistance was subsequently expanded to cover 22 countries south of the Sahara and north of the Equator. Sub-regional organisations were established in Africa at around the same time. Similarly, the International Fund for Agricultural Development established its Special Programme for Sub-Saharan Countries Affected by Drought and Desertification in 1985, after another crippling drought: it has mobilised some $400 million and this, combined with another $350 million contributed through co-financing, has helped to pay for 45 projects in 25 countries.

The UN first addressed the issue on a global scale at the United Nations Conference on Desertification, held in Nairobi in 1977, which put the issue on the international agenda as a worldwide economic, social and environmental problem. It produced the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, a series of guidelines and recommendations designed, among other things, to help affected countries to draw up plans to tackle the problem, and to stimulate and co-ordinate help from the international community. In principle the Plan of Action left little to be desired – an external review in 1990 found that its principles were still valid – but in practice, its implementation fell far short of expectations.

For a start neither the governments of the affected countries, nor international aid donors gave it sufficient priority. In 1980 it was estimated that $4.5 billion would have to be spent each year if the Plan of Action was to be properly implemented: $2.4 billion of this was needed in countries that would have largely to rely on foreign aid. Yet only a

quarter of the required aid, $0.6 billion, was actually being provided. Meanwhile only 20 governments, less than a quarter of those whose countries were affected, had developed national plans to combat desertification by 1991 – 14 years after the Plan of Action had been agreed.

When governments and donors did take action, the effort was often spoiled through lack of co-ordination. Aid-giving countries and agencies frequently insisted that recipient countries should draw up new plans as a framework for their assistance – with little relation to similar plans that had already been produced at the behest of other donors – and then all too often did not see them to completion. So the countries became littered with partially implemented plans. Even more important, the social dimension of desertification was given too little attention, and the people actually affected by it became alienated because they were insufficiently consulted. The problem continued to get worse.

The preamble of the Convention appreciates "the significance of the past efforts and experience of States and international organisations in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, particularly in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification", but it recognises that "despite efforts in the past, progress... has not met expectations." It adds: "a new and more effective approach is needed at all levels within the framework of sustainable development."

Developing nations, led by African countries, insisted that proper attention should be given to desertification during the preparations for the 1992 Earth Summit. Eventually, after tough bargaining, the world's leaders agreed in Agenda 21 to call on the UN General Assembly to set up an Inter-governmental Negotiating Committee to prepare a legally binding instrument by June 1994.

After 13 months of difficult negotiations in five sessions in Nairobi, Geneva, New York and Paris – and against many observers' expectations – the Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (to give it its full name), was adopted on time on 17 June 1994 and opened for signature in Paris in October that year. By May 1995 a total of 105 countries had signed.

The Convention – symbolising agreement between developed and developing countries on the need for a global coalition to address desertification – is different from previous attempts to combat the crisis, since it is legally binding. Countries that accede to it will be obliged to implement it. Unlike some other international environmental treaties, it includes concrete national commitments for practical action, particularly at the local level where desertification must primarily be fought, and places great emphasis on the machinery needed to implement it and monitor its progress. Finalising the Convention is one the most important achievements to date in the follow-up to the Earth Summit, bringing the spirit of Rio, literally, down to earth.

4 Matters of Principle

OBJECTIVES

The objective of having a Convention is to secure the long-term commitment of its Parties through a legally binding document.

The Convention describes its objective as: "to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international co-operation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas."

It adds: "Achieving this objective will involve long-term integrated strategies that focus simultaneously, in affected areas, on improved productivity of the land and the rehabilitation, conservation, and sustainable management of land and water resources, leading to improved living conditions, in particular at the community level."

The Convention takes an innovative approach in the way it tackles desertification and international environmental law as a whole. It is designed to forge a new deal between governments, the international community, development practitioners and local people.

Containing 40 articles and four Regional Annexes (on the implementation of the treaty in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean), its regularly repeated aim is to "combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought." It gives priority to Africa, the continent where the problem causes the most distress. Indeed, the session of the Inter-governmental Negotiating Committee which adopted the text of the Convention, passed a resolution on urgent action for Africa – calling on affected African countries urgently to prepare action programmes and on donors to support them – even before the treaty formally comes into force.

The Convention pioneers a democratic, bottom-up approach in international environmental law. It clearly emphasises that the people who bear the brunt of desertification – and who best understand the fragile environments in which they live – must be fully involved and be allowed to participate in the decisions that will shape their lives. The first principle of the treaty, commits Parties to "ensure that decisions on the design and implementation of programmes... are taken with the participation of populations and local communities and that an enabling environment is created at higher levels to facilitate action at national and local levels."

The second principle again breaks new ground by stressing the need for international partnership and co-ordination, both to avoid duplication of effort and to get away from the traditionally one-sided relationship between donors and recipients of assistance. It says that: "Parties should, in a spirit of international solidarity and partnership, improve co-operation and co-ordination at sub-regional, regional and international levels, and better focus financial, human, organisational and technical resources where they are needed."

The third principle of the treaty extends the concept of partnership to relationships within the affected countries and, in doing so, re-emphasises the importance of ensuring the participation of local people and communities. It lays down that: "Parties should develop, in a spirit of partnership, co-operation among all levels of government, communities, non-governmental organisations and landholders to establish a better understanding of the nature and

OBLIGATIONS OF AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

Affected country Parties undertake to:

a) Give due priority to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, and allocate adequate resources in accordance with their circumstances and capabilities.

b) Establish strategies and priorities, within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies, to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

c) Address the underlying causes of desertification and pay special attention to the socio-economic factors contributing to desertification processes.

d) Promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of non-governmental organisations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

e) Provide an enabling environment by strengthening, as appropriate, relevant existing legislation and, where they do not exist, enacting new laws and establishing long-term policies and action programmes.

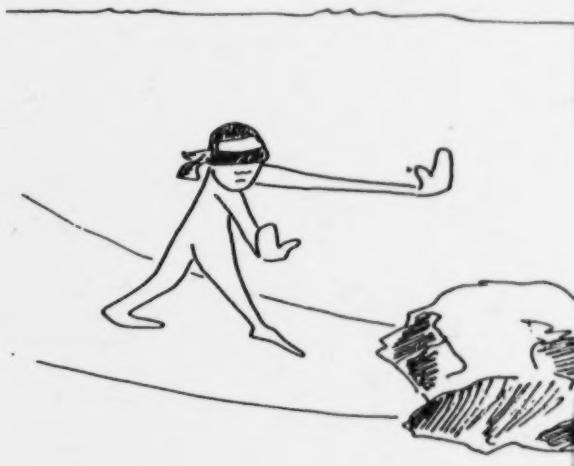
value of land and scarce water resources in affected areas and to work towards their sustainable use."

The fourth and final principle says that: "Parties should take into full consideration the special needs and circumstances of affected developing country Parties, particularly the least developed among them."

The treaty also insists at the outset that programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought must not be conceived and implemented in isolation, but should be integrated into development policies as a whole. And it emphasises the need to "adopt an integrated approach addressing the physical, biological, and socio-economic aspects of the processes of desertification and drought."

The Convention also lays special emphasis on the economic environment, both internationally and within nations, and makes it clear that this must be arranged so as to enable desertification to be tackled effectively. Parties are obliged to give "due attention" to the effects of trade, marketing arrangements and debt on the affected developing countries among them "with a view to establishing an enabling international economic environment conducive to the promotion of sustainable development." And they are obliged to integrate their anti-desertification efforts with "strategies for poverty eradication."

The general obligations of the treaty stress the importance of co-operation – within inter-governmental organisations, within



OBLIGATIONS OF DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES

Developed country Parties undertake to:

a) Actively support, as agreed, individually or jointly, the efforts of affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, and the least developed countries, to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

b) Provide substantial financial resources and other forms of support to assist affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, effectively to develop and implement their own long-term plans and strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

c) Promote the mobilisation of new and additional funding.

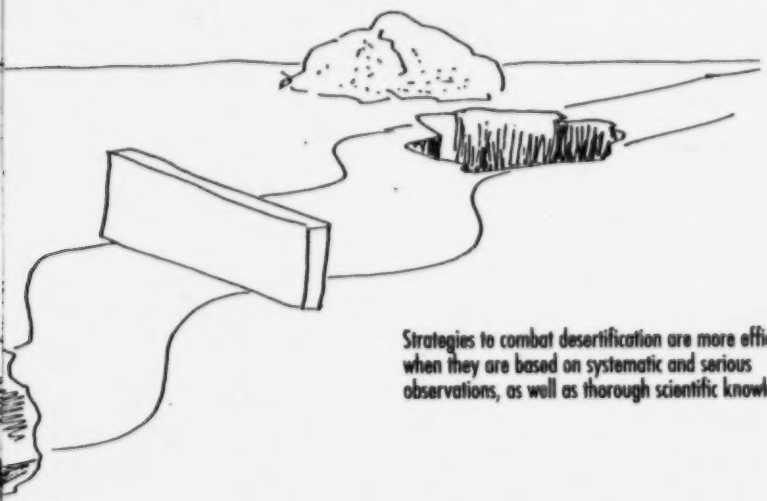
d) Encourage the mobilisation of funding from the private sector and other non-governmental sources.

e) Promote and facilitate access by affected Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how.

regions and sub-regions, and internationally. And they lay down that Parties must "promote co-operation among affected country Parties in the fields of environmental protection and the conservation of land and water resources, as they relate to desertification and drought."

Both affected and developed country Parties undertake comprehensive sets of obligations under the treaty (see boxes). The Convention acknowledges the importance of the private sector, and gives an unprecedented role to the whole society, particularly non-governmental organisations, in its implementation.

The treaty redirects scientific and technological efforts, and emphasises the way that local populations can make use of scientific knowledge, and contribute to it. It has flexible and potentially effective review mechanisms, and provisions to ensure co-operation among countries and international organisations.



Strategies to combat desertification are more efficient when they are based on systematic and serious observations, as well as thorough scientific knowledge.

5 From Aid to Partnership

The Convention is probably the first legally-binding international instrument clearly to stress partnership rather than aid. Up to now, efforts to combat desertification – like other development initiatives – have generally been governed by a series of one-sided relationships.

Affected developing countries seek assistance from developed ones. Sometimes affected countries design programmes and projects, and seek finance for them. Sometimes donors insist that they draw up specific action programmes in return for assistance.

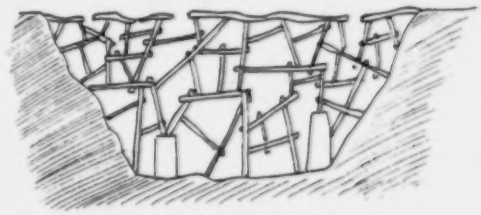
There are also one-way processes within affected countries. Assistance is directed from central government to the affected people, often without consulting them or involving them in the decisions of how it is spent.

These one-sided approaches have rarely worked and the Convention firmly places partnership at the cutting edge of implementation. It underlines the "importance and necessity of international co-operation and partnership" and says that national plans must be carried out "in a spirit of partnership, between the donor community, governments at all levels, local populations and community groups."

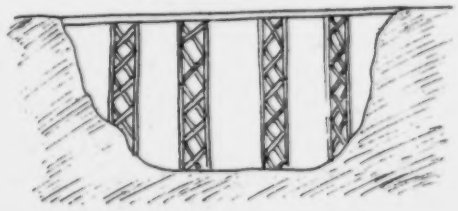
In practice National Action Programmes are to be drawn up by a democratic, but complex, process which will require all the actors – foreign donors (both bilateral and multilateral), regional organisations, national and local government, non-governmental organisations and the local people themselves – to work together. Partnership agreements will be negotiated and agreed on how these plans are to be implemented. So programmes and priorities will be worked out jointly, not imposed by one group on another. This will be much more efficient, as well as more equitable and democratic, because it will avoid duplication and ensure co-ordination.

This spirit runs throughout the convention. The Regional Implementation Annex for Africa, for example, calls on African country Parties "to organise consultative processes at the national, sub-regional and regional levels" which may "serve as a forum to negotiate and conclude partnership agreements based on national, sub-regional and regional action programmes."

To mobilise financial resources, Parties will rationalise and strengthen the management of existing resources for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought...



... by using them more effectively and efficiently.



6 The Bottom-up Approach

The most important partnership to be forged in tackling desertification is between aid donors, national governments and local administrations and the people of the drylands themselves. For as the years have gone by, as many projects have failed, and as the problem has continued to grow, it has become clear that desertification cannot be effectively tackled unless the people most affected are fully involved and committed.

The people of developing country drylands are their greatest resource. They know their land better than anyone. They have just as much skill in making a living off it as the American grain producer or the rice-grower of China. In some ways their skills may be greater, for they have to work in far more difficult conditions, with much more fragile soils, a much harsher climate, and far fewer resources. They are potentially the world's most important asset in combating desertification.

Yet, in the past, they have usually been ignored, and even blamed for desertification. Colonial administrations often imposed solutions that had worked in their home countries, where conditions were very different; the new national governments often persisted with them. Old, sustainable ways of using the land were frequently disrupted, and nomads and other people of the drylands had to abandon their livelihoods.

The local people were alienated, particularly as outside solutions rarely worked – and often deepened their poverty. At times the people who were supposed to be benefiting from a project would actually be longing for it to be completed, and for the outsiders to go away, so that they could get back to doing things in their own way. All too often, two or three years later, little trace of the scheme would remain.

Some projects, however, did succeed; often these had been run by organisations which had set out to listen to the local people, learn about their techniques and priorities, and work out solutions with them. This has reinforced the increasing realisation that the people of the drylands must be able to participate fully in tackling the problems that beset their lives.

The concept of 'participation' has been current for many years. But often it has merely been grafted onto the old "top-down" approach: decisions on programmes have been made elsewhere, and then local people have been invited – or told – to participate in them. Real participation means that decisions are taken ***by*** the people who are to be affected by them, not ***for*** them, giving them power to put what has been decided into practice.

Special efforts have to be made to enable women to participate, as, even within their own societies, they are the most affected by desertification and yet have the least power to do anything about it. Women do much of the work on the land, but their voices are muted even in their own communities; such help, advice, and communication that come from outside are usually directed at the men.

The Convention breaks new ground by enshrining a bottom-up approach in international law. It repeatedly emphasises the importance of full participation, and specifically underlines "the important role played by women". It also stresses "the special role of non-governmental organisations" and gives them an important role in ensuring implementation.

National Action Programmes will be elaborated through a continuing participatory process.

Parties commit themselves to "provide for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organisations and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organisations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of National Action Programmes." This theme runs right through the Convention. African countries agree, in their Regional Implementation Annex, for example, that "a consultative and participatory process involving appropriate levels of government, local populations, communities and non-governmental organisations shall be undertaken to provide guidance on a strategy with flexible planning to allow maximum participation from local populations and communities." They commit themselves to include in their National Action Programmes "the increase in participation of local populations and communities, including women, farmers and pastoralists, and delegation to them of more responsibility for management." Meanwhile Asian Parties agree, in their Annex, to "involve affected populations, including local communities, in the elaboration, co-ordination and implementation of their action programmes through a locally-driven consultative process, with the co-operation of local authorities and relevant national and non-governmental organisations."

7 Getting the Act Together

The Convention lays down: "The Parties shall develop operational mechanisms, particularly at the national and field levels, to ensure the fullest possible co-ordination among developed country Parties, developing country Parties, and relevant inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, in order to avoid duplication, harmonise interventions and approaches, and maximise the impact of assistance. In affected developing country Parties, priority will be given to co-ordinating activities related to international co-operation in order to maximise the efficient use of resources, to ensure responsive assistance, and to facilitate the implementation of National Action Programmes and priorities under this Convention."

Much of the effort that has gone into fighting desertification has been dissipated through unnecessary competition between donors, ministries, plans, projects and approaches. Donor countries or agencies have often made recipient governments draw up new plans as a framework for their help – and these often bore little relation to the programmes they had already worked out with other donors. These programmes were often only partially funded and never completed, because the next donor would want to start all over again.

The Convention, therefore, stresses co-ordination and co-operation, and aims to stop such duplication from continuing. Hence its concentration on partnership, and its determination that all actors shall get together both to work out national programmes and to decide how they shall be implemented.

It lays down that National Action Programmes shall "promote policies and strengthen institutional frameworks which develop co-operation and co-ordination, in a spirit of partnership, between the donor community, governments at all levels, local populations and community groups."

Parties commit themselves to "financial co-operation to provide predictability for action programmes allowing for necessary long-term planning." They agree "to work closely together, directly and through relevant inter-governmental organisations, in the elaboration and implementation of action programmes." They undertake, under their general obligations, to promote co-operation among affected country Parties to protect the environment and conserve land and water, and to "strengthen sub-regional, regional and international co-operation."

The African Parties agree, in their Annex, that National Action Programmes shall be a central and integral part of the broader process of formulating national policies for sustainable development. All Parties agree to "co-operate with each other and through competent inter-governmental organisations, as well as with non-governmental organisations, in undertaking and supporting public awareness and educational programmes..."

8 Broadening the Focus

Most attempts to fight desertification have concentrated more on its symptoms than on its causes. They have concentrated on mitigating its effects, and on reducing the human activities that seem to be immediately contributing to them.

They have sought to tackle overcultivation, overgrazing, deforestation and faulty irrigation directly, but without addressing the underlying social and economic pressures that have produced them. This has often resulted, in effect, in blaming the victims of desertification for causing it, without making a serious attempt to understand the forces outside their control which are driving them to overexploit the land.

It is now accepted that this narrow focus was one of the reasons why the implementation of the 1977 Plan of Action proved to be disappointing. The Convention has set out to rectify this by integrating social and economic issues into the heart of its analysis and its implementation, and giving them equal weight to the physical and biological aspects of desertification.

Affected country Parties undertake, in obligations under the Convention, to "address the underlying causes of desertification, and pay special attention to the socio-economic factors contributing to desertification processes."

All Parties have an obligation to "adopt an integrated approach addressing the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects of the processes of desertification and drought." More specifically they promise to "integrate strategies for poverty eradication into efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought."

It is predominantly poverty that forces the people of the drylands to extract as much as they can from the land, and produces the imperative for short-term survival that gives them no choice but to act against their long-term interests. Any effective strategy must have the assault on poverty at its very centre.

Such a strategy must also take social structures and issues of land ownership into account and pay proper attention to education, training, and transport and communications in order to provide the fully integrated approach which alone can effectively combat desertification. Big national and international plans must be linked to the small decisions actually taken by the people on the ground. Local development programmes must bring an integrated package of investment and capacity-building to affected areas, and strengthen the ability of local people to programme and manage their resources.

9 An Enabling Environment

For affected countries – and the people of the drylands – to tackle desertification effectively, the conditions must be right. It is hard for governments or local people to give much attention to the crisis if they are constantly preoccupied with economic and physical survival. The Convention recognises the need for "an enabling environment" that makes it possible for them to pursue sustainable development.

At the national level, an enabling environment would include good governance and stability, legal and administrative reform, economic incentives and improved infrastructure. It would also require a change in the present bias in the economies of many developing countries which favours industry, towns and cities at the expense of agriculture and the countryside. This can partly be done – and pressure taken off the land at the same time – by diversifying economic options and promoting alternative livelihoods: examples could include establishing and maintaining village forestry schemes, generating renewable energy, and promoting wildlife-based tourism.

Local people need to have secure and equitable rights to their land: they will not look after it if they fear it may be taken from them. In their Regional Implementation Annex, African Parties agree to "adjusting, as appropriate, the institutional and regulatory framework of natural resource management to provide security of land tenure for local populations."

International economic factors have also caused "unsustainable development practices", as the Regional Implementation Annex for Latin America and the Caribbean recognises.

> Debt, fluctuating and deteriorating terms of trade over the last 20 years, tariff and non-tariff barriers and painful structural adjustment programmes have all caused countries to produce more and more from the land to pay their way. Dumping subsidised food surpluses by some developed countries has sometimes destroyed local farmers' markets in developing nations.
>
> The Parties agree to "give due attention, within the relevant international and regional bodies, to the situation of affected developing country Parties with regard to international trade, marketing arrangements and debt with a view to establishing an enabling international economic environment conducive to the promotion of sustainable development."

Parties commit themselves to address the root causes of desertification and to pay special attention to socio-economic factors that contribute to it.

10 Action Programmes

The Convention is to be implemented through National Action Programmes supplemented by regional and sub-regional ones. Effective action to combat desertification has to be carried out locally – and must be adapted to local circumstances and conditions. But it must also be integrated into national and regional strategies to ensure that it gets adequate priority, to avoid duplication, and to make sure that resources are used as well as possible.

National Action Programmes form the very core of the treaty. Affected Parties should prepare, publicise and implement them as "the central element" in their strategies. They are to use and build on existing successful and relevant plans and programmes. They are to be closely interlinked with other efforts to formulate sustainable development policies, and are to be "updated through a continuing participatory process on the basis of lessons from field action" and from the results of research.

The programmes are to identify the factors contributing to desertification, and practical measures necessary to combat it and to mitigate the effects of drought. And they should specify the respective roles of government, local communities and land-users and what resources are needed, and available.

The Convention lays down seven general requirements for National Action Programmes (Box 1) and five voluntary elements (Box 2). It identifies priority fields for action (Box 3) and says that each affected country Party – depending on its circumstances – should include at least some of them in its National Action Programme.

BOX 1

The requirements for National Action Programmes are to:

- "incorporate long-term strategies..., emphasise implementation and be integrated with national policies for sustainable development;"
- "allow for modifications to be made in response to changing circumstances and be sufficiently flexible at the local level to cope with different socio-economic, biological and geo-physical conditions;"
- "give particular attention to the implementation of preventative measures for lands that are not yet degraded or which are only slightly degraded;"
- "enhance national climatological, meteorological and hydrological capabilities and the means to provide for drought early warning;"
- "promote policies and strengthen institutional frameworks which develop co-operation and co-ordination, and facilitate access by local populations to appropriate information and technology;"
- "provide for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels...;" and
- "require regular review of, and progress reports on, their implementation."

BOX 2

The voluntary elements are:

- the establishment and/or strengthening of early warning systems and of mechanisms for helping environmental refugees;
- the strengthening of preparedness for drought, and of the management of its impacts, at local national, sub-regional and regional levels;
- the "establishment and/or strengthening... of food security systems, including storage and marketing facilities, particularly in rural areas;"
- the establishment of projects to develop alternative livelihoods "that could provide incomes in drought prone areas;" and
- "the development of sustainable irrigation schemes for both crops and livestock."

BOX 3

The eight priority fields for action are:-

- "promotion of alternative livelihoods and improvement of national economic environments with a view to strengthening programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty and at ensuring food security;"
- "demographic dynamics;"
- "sustainable management of natural resources;"
- "sustainable agricultural practices;"
- "development and efficient use of various energy sources;"
- "institutional and legal frameworks;"
- "strengthening of capabilities for assessment and systematic observation, including hydrological and metreological services;" and
- "capacity-building, education and public awareness."

All these also apply to sub-regional and regional programmes. Affected country Parties agree to consult and co-operate to prepare these "to harmonise, complement and increase the efficiency of national programmes."

The Parties undertake to encourage the United Nations' system and other inter-governmental organisations, the scientific community and non-governmental organisations to support the action programmes. Developed countries are to channel their assistance both directly and through multilateral organisations. African and other least developed countries are to be given priority.

Specific supporting measures are also laid down by the Convention (Box 4).

BOX 4

Measures to support action programmes should include:

- "financial co-operation to provide predictability for action programmes, allowing for necessary long-term planning;"
- "elaboration and use of co-operation mechanisms, which better enable support at the local level, including action through non-governmental organisations, in order to promote the replicability of successful pilot programme activities where relevant;"
- "increased flexibility in project design, funding and implementation in keeping with the experimental, iterative approach indicated for participatory action at the local community level;" and
- "as appropriate, administrative and budgetary procedures that increase the efficiency of co-operation and of support programmes."

11 Capacity-Building

Action programmes cannot be effective, and the fight against desertification and the effects of drought cannot be won, unless strong enough institutions exist to carry them out – and the people understand and support what is being done. So the Convention stresses the significance of capacity-building and of promoting public awareness.

Parties agree to promote the building of institutions, the training of people and the development of capacities both locally and nationally. And they agree to do so in the co-operative and participatory spirit that pervades the treaty.

Affected developing countries are to review their capacities and facilities – and the potential for strengthening them in co-operation with other Parties and inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations. National institutions and legal frameworks are to be built up and new ones created when needed.

National training and research capacities and strategic planning and management are also to be strengthened, and field agents and members of rural organisations are to be trained in participatory approaches. Strengthening the capacity of local people to draw up programmes to manage their resources is perhaps the single most important step in constructing a healthier relationship between people, power and the environment.

There is to be a technological give and take. Services to disseminate technologies and techniques more effectively to local people are to be established and reinforced. Meanwhile through a bottom-up approach, the Parties agree to foster "the use and dissemination of the knowledge, know-how and practices of local people."

Similarly the Parties undertake to provide training and technology in the use of alternative – especially renewable – energy, to lessen dependence on fuelwood. They agree to adapt traditional methods of agriculture and pastoralism and environmentally sound technology to modern conditions. And they are to promote "alternative livelihoods, including training in new skills."

They are to co-operate in strengthening developing countries' capacity to collect, analyse and exchange scientific and technological information, and they are to train decision-makers, managers and personnel responsible for data on food production and early warnings of drought.

The Parties agree to co-operate amongst themselves, and with inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, in organising campaigns to raise public awareness. They will encourage the establishment of associations that contribute to this and help people get permanent access to the information they need.

They agree to assess educational needs in affected areas; expand educational and literacy programmes, especially for women and girls; develop "interdisciplinary participatory programmes" to integrate awareness of desertification and drought into educational systems and programmes; and establish and strengthen networks of regional education and training centres.

Throughout, the Parties agree to promote wide and permanent public participation in education and awareness activities.

12 Technology and Science

The Convention promotes co-ordination of scientific research and co-operation in the transfer of technology. Both are to be redirected to meet the requirements of the people who most need it, with considerable weight placed on the value of traditional knowledge and skills.

The Parties undertake to "promote, finance and/or facilitate the financing of the transfer, acquisition, adaptation and development of environmentally sound, economically viable and socially acceptable technologies." They agree to use fully existing systems and clearing houses, to facilitate co-operation between affected Parties and access to suitable technologies on favourable terms, and to take measures to create domestic market conditions and incentives that will ease the process.

They also commit themselves to promote and use traditional and local "technology, knowledge, know-how and practices", to make inventories of them, to promote their improvement and dissemination, to adapt them for wide use and integrate them with modern technology, and to ensure that local peoples benefit directly from any commercial use.

The Parties also agree to support research to increase knowledge of the causes and impacts of desertification and drought. This should "address the specific needs of local populations and lead to the identification and implementation of solutions that improve the living standards of people in affected areas." It should also "protect, integrate, enhance and validate traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices." Local people should benefit from any commercial use of their intellectual property and any technology derived from it.

The Convention commits Parties to develop research capabilities in affected developing country Parties, particularly in Africa; to promote joint research programmes to develop "improved, affordable and accessible technologies for sustainable development though effective participation of local populations and communities"; to enhance the availability of water resources; to take into account the relationship between desertification, poverty and migration; and to include research priorities for their areas in their action programmes.

The Parties also agree to "integrate and co-ordinate the collection, analysis and exchange" of information through the "global network of institutions and facilities." This is to ensure "systematic observation of land degradation", which, among other things, would "help accomplish early warning and advance planning for periods of adverse climatic variation." The Parties undertake to ensure that this addresses the needs of local communities as well as decision-makers.

13 Finance

Not surprisingly, the financial provisions proved to be the hardest part of the Convention to negotiate. Developed countries, in the midst of cutting domestic spending and aid budgets, were reluctant to commit themselves to providing extra money. But developing countries felt strongly that they should receive new and additional resources from the donor community, if they were to dedicate more of their own budgets, adopt new policies and undertake substantial new programmes to combat desertification. Much of the final negotiations were spent trying to reconcile these positions.

Lack of funds – from both developed and developing countries – has bedevilled previous attempts to get to grips with the crisis, notably the 1977 Plan of Action. UNEP has calculated that it would cost between $10 billion and $22.4 billion a year for 20 years to fight desertification effectively – but that actual expenditure in developing countries was running at less than $1 billion a year in the 1980s. It is also true that the resources that were available were not spent effectively enough.

Rather than setting up a single system of funding, the Convention concentrates on mobilising resources through all existing channels, strengthening them and reorientating them to fit its integrated, bottom-up approach. It is often best to provide much of the money in small packages of grants and loans to local people, rather than devoting it to government bureaucracies or expensive consultants, and the Convention makes it clear that major investments should be channeled to the people actually affected by desertification and drought.

The Convention recognises the need for "substantial financial resources, including new and additional funding." Both developed and developing Parties agree, "taking into account their capabilities", to "make every effort to ensure that adequate financial resources are available."

In an echo of these words, affected developing country Parties, undertake "to mobilise adequate financial resources" for their National Action Programmes. In return, developed country Parties undertake to "mobilise substantial financial resources", including grants and concessional loans, in support of the programmes. They also promise to "promote the mobilisation of adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional funding from the Global Environment Facility" – jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, UNEP and the World Bank – which provides grant and concessional funds to developing countries for projects and activities that aim to protect the global environment.

Developed countries agree to facilitate the transfer of technology, knowledge and know-how, and to co-operate with developing countries in exploring "innovative methods and incentives for mobilising and channeling resources, including those of foundations, non-governmental organisations and other private sector entities." These should particularly include debt swaps, which increase developing countries' funds by reducing their debt burden.

They resolve to give priority to affected African country Parties, while not neglecting similar countries in other regions, and go somewhat further in their undertakings in the

Regional Annex for Africa, where they agree to "continue to allocate significant resources and/or increased resources."

Affected developing countries and regional organisations will convene "consultative processes" in support of national, sub-regional and regional action programmes. In Africa, these will lead to partnership agreements, which will set out the roles to be played in funding National Action Programmes by governments, donors, and non-governmental organisations. These should both help to mobilise funds and make sure that they are raised and spent in an integrated way.

Both developed and developing countries undertake to improve the quality of their funding, and to "rationalise and strengthen the management of resources already allocated... by using them more effectively and efficiently, assessing their successes and shortcomings, removing hindrances to their effective use and, where necessary, reorientating programmes in light of the integrated long-term approach adopted pursuant to this Convention."

They agree to examine how to strengthen regional and sub-regional co-operation and to give "due priority and attention" to supporting the activities of affected developing countries, particularly in Africa, that advance implementation of the Convention in the governing bodies of multilateral financial institutions.

The Convention does not establish a special fund, but sets up a Global Mechanism to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial sources in tackling desertification and the effects of drought and to "promote actions leading to the mobilisation and channelling of substantial financial resources... to affected developing country Parties."

In addition, the activities of the Global Mechanism would draw up an inventory of available bilateral and multilateral co-operation programmes; provide advice, on request, to Parties on sources of financial assistance and on innovative methods of raising money to help improve "the co-ordination of co-operative activities at the national level"; and to provide Parties and organisations with information on available sources of funds and funding patterns.

The Conference of the Parties is to consider adopting policies which, among other things, would facilitate the establishment of mechanisms, such as national desertification funds, "to channel financial resources rapidly and efficiently to the local level."

Developing countries agree to use "National Co-ordinating Mechanisms." Participatory and integrated into national development programmes, these are to ensure the efficient use of money and involve non-governmental organisations, local groups and the private sector in raising money, implementing programmes and ensuring that funds get to the local level. The convention adds that donors can enhance this by "improved co-ordination and flexible programming."

It also notes that the full implementation of developing country Parties' obligations under the Convention, will be "greatly assisted" if the developed nations fulfil their own obligations, particularly on finance and the transfer of technology.

14 Institutions and Procedures

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is established as the "supreme body" of the Convention. The COP's job is to make "the decisions necessary to promote effective implementation" of the Convention. It will, among other things, regularly review implementation and the functioning of the Convention's institutions, establish subsidiary bodies, give them guidance, and review their reports to promote and facilitate an exchange of information on measures adopted by the Parties.

The Convention also establishes a Permanent Secretariat: the first COP will designate it and make arrangements for its functioning. It will, among other duties, make arrangements for sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies, and compile and transmit reports submitted to it. It will also facilitate assistance to developing country Parties, particularly in Africa, to compile and communicate the information required by the Convention.

It will report on the execution of its functions to the COP and co-ordinate its activities with the secretariats of other international bodies and conventions.

Scientific and technological information and advice will be provided by a multidisciplinary Committee on Science and Technology , which will be composed of government representatives and open to all Parties. The Committee will survey the existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies and make recommendations on how to link them better.

The COP will set up and maintain a roster of independent experts and draw on it to form ad hoc panels to give it information and advice on specific issues.

All Parties are to give reports to the COP on what they have done to implement the Convention. Affected countries are to describe their strategies to fulfil their obligations under the Convention, and those that have implemented action programmes are to give detailed descriptions of them. The COP will facilitate the provision of technical and financial support for this to affected developing countries, particularly in Africa.

Developed country Parties are to report on what they have done to help in the preparation and implementation of action programmes – and on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing.

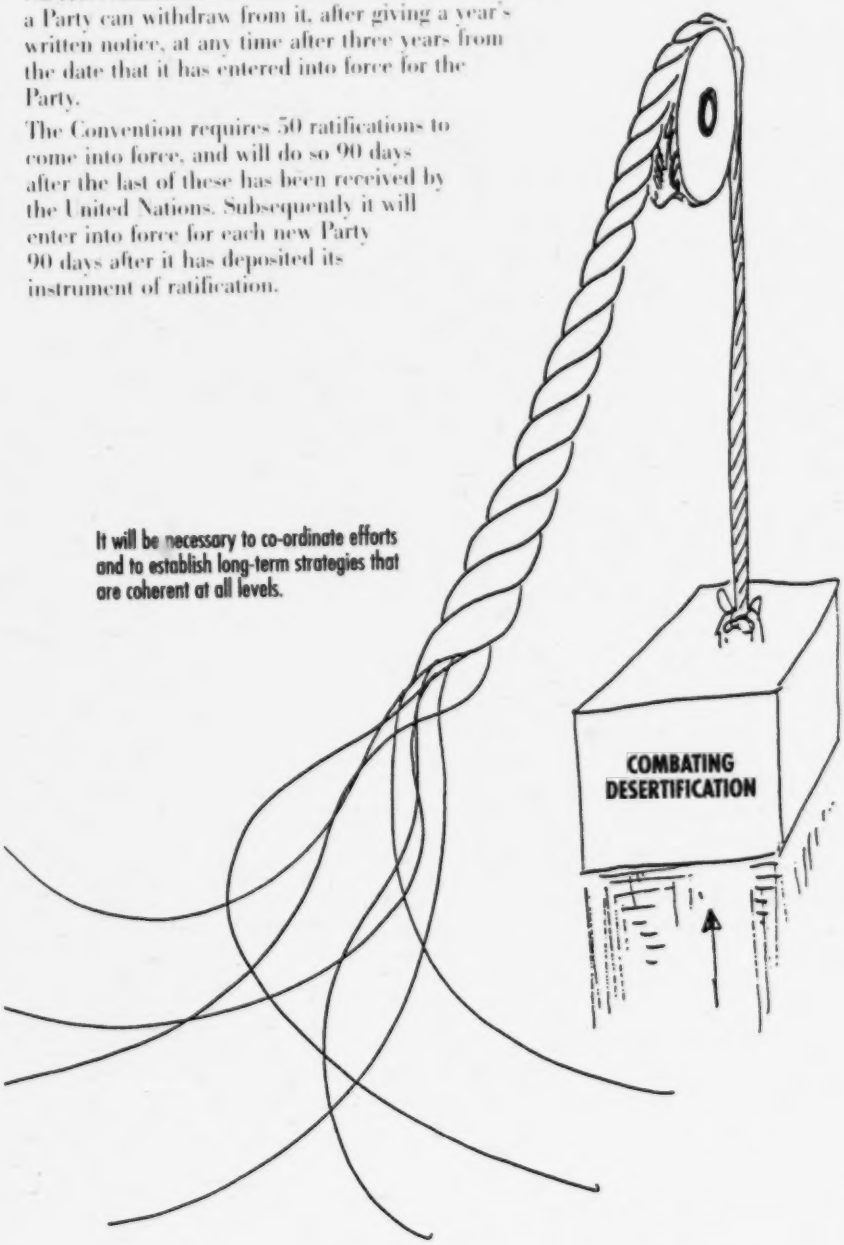
Any Party may propose amendments to the Convention. These would be adopted by an ordinary meeting of the COP, preferably by consensus, but, as a last resort, by a two-thirds majority vote. Any additional annex or amendment to an existing annex can be adopted in the same way, but the majority for adopting or amending a regional implementation annex must include a two-thirds majority vote of the Parties of the region concerned, who are present and voting. Every Party has one vote, but regional economic integration organisations can vote as a block on certain issues.

Disputes are to be resolved through negotiation or other peaceful means. When Parties join the Convention they must choose between arbitration and submission to the International Court of Justice as a means of resolving any disputes. If two disputing Parties cannot agree on the means of resolution after 12 months, they must submit to conciliation.

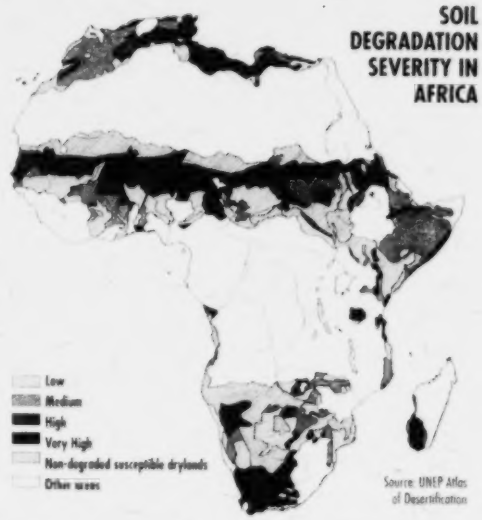
No reservations can be made to the Convention, but a Party can withdraw from it, after giving a year's written notice, at any time after three years from the date that it has entered into force for the Party.

The Convention requires 50 ratifications to come into force, and will do so 90 days after the last of these has been received by the United Nations. Subsequently it will enter into force for each new Party 90 days after it has deposited its instrument of ratification.

It will be necessary to co-ordinate efforts and to establish long-term strategies that are coherent at all levels.



15 Africa



SOIL DEGRADATION SEVERITY IN AFRICA

Africa is given priority and particular attention throughout the Convention and the first of four special Regional Annexes is devoted to the continent. Desertification has its greatest impact in Africa. Two-thirds of the continent is desert or drylands, and 73 per cent of its agricultural drylands are already severely or moderately degraded.

There are frequent severe droughts, and many countries are affected by them and by desertification. Many of the affected countries are landlocked, making communications difficult. Most suffer from widespread poverty, and many are among the world's least developed countries. They rely heavily on natural resources, need significant international assistance, and suffer from weak institutions and infrastructure, debt, political instability and deteriorating and fluctuating terms of trade. This gives the Convention the potential to help bring about a better structure for co-ordinating aid as a whole.

Developed countries agree, among other things, to "give priority to affected African country Parties" and to "continue to allocate significant resources and/or increase resources" to combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought. The commitments of African country Parties include an undertaking to make this "a central strategy" in their efforts to eradicate poverty. They also agree to aim to make financial allocations that reflect "the new priority" Africa has accorded to the issue, and to sustain and strengthen current reforms toward "greater decentralisation and resource tenure" and to reinforce local participation.

These countries are to draw up National Action Programmes as a "central and integral" part of formulating sustainable development policies, in a process that allows for "maximum participation from local populations and communities." And much more detail on the content of the programmes is specified in the main body of the Convention.

The programmes should identify factors contributing to desertification and/or drought, draw on past experiences in tackling them, and delegate more responsibility to local people and communities, including women, farmers and pastoralists.

They are to include "measures to improve the economic environment with a view to eradicating poverty": the Convention lays down specific actions to increase incomes and employment opportunities, particularly for the poorest, and improve "the long-term prospects of rural economies." They are to reduce pressure on the land through

population and migration policies and to improve food security by promoting the use of drought-resistant crops and integrated dryland farming systems.

The Parties also agree that the programmes should include measures to conserve natural resources – by ensuring that they are managed sustainably and in an integrated way, through education and through ensuring the development and efficient use of diverse, alternative and renewable sources of energy and other technologies "to alleviate the pressure on fragile natural resources."

There are to be measures to define the roles of the different branches of government, to encourage "active decentralisation" and to adjust, as appropriate, "the institutional and regulatory framework of natural resource management to provide security of land tenure for local populations."

Finally the programmes are to include measures to improve knowledge of desertification, by promoting research, encouraging studies and improving national capabilities, and to monitor and assess the effects of drought.

But drought and desertification do not respect national boundaries, and so the Annex commits Parties to draw up joint programmes at the regional and sub-regional levels. The sub-regional programmes are to focus on nine areas of co-operation:

- programmes for the sustainable management of natural resources that cross frontiers;
- programmes to develop alternative energy sources;
- management and control of agricultural pests and diseases;
- capacity-building, education and public awareness;
- scientific and technical co-operation;
- early warning systems and joint planning to mitigate the effects of drought;
- exploring ways of sharing experiences, particularly over local participation, and creating an "enabling environment" for improved management of the land and for the use of appropriate technologies;
- strengthening the capacity of sub-regional organisations; and
- developing policies in such fields as trade and marketing.

African Parties to the Convention are to co-ordinate "the preparation, negotiation and implementation" of the national, sub-regional and regional action programmes, but they can involve other Parties and organisations in the process. They will also organise consultative processes at these levels; developed country Parties will be encouraged to participate in them, if so invited. These may serve as forums to negotiate and conclude partnership agreements. They may also specify the contributions to the programmes to be made by African Parties, and other members of the consultative groups, and identify funding arrangements for implementing the programmes, as well as priorities and agreements both on their implementation and on the indicators needed to evaluate them. The Secretariat may help convene these consultative process, at the request of African country Parties.

The Inter-governmental Negotiating Committee, which drew up the Convention, passed a resolution on urgent action for Africa, calling for steps to be taken to prepare national and sub-regional action programmes, and to establish partnership arrangements – with funding from donors – even before the treaty enters into force.

16 Other Regions

There are three further special Regional Annexes to the Convention to provide "guidelines and arrangements" for its effective implementation. None lay down new obligations on Parties, apart from those in the main text of the treaty, but all provide for action programmes to be an "integral part" of their policies for sustainable development.

Asia

Asia contains the largest amount of land affected by desertification of any continent, just under 1,400 million hectares. Some 71 per cent of its drylands – one-third of its entire area – is moderately to severely degraded. The Annex calls attention to the "high proportion of areas… affected by, or vulnerable to, desertification and drought", the heavy pressure on natural resources, and the effect of poverty in increasing land degradation and pressure on scarce water resources.

Parties may survey the state of affected areas, evaluate past and current efforts to address the problem, and designate appropriate bodies to prepare, co-ordinate and implement action programmes. They may involve affected people at all stages through a locally driven consultative process. They may then prepare technical and financial programmes based on what they learn from these activities.

They may promote the integrated management of drainage basins, the conservation of soil resources and the enhancement and efficient use of water resources. They may develop and use ways of evaluating the implementation of their action programmes, strengthen and/or establish information, evaluation and follow-up and early warning systems and, when there is international co-operation, "formulate in a spirit of partnership… appropriate arrangements supporting their action programmes" including arrangements for financial and technical resources.

Affected Parties may agree to prepare and implement sub-regional or joint action programmes, which may include: joint programmes for the sustainable management of resources that cross national boundaries; setting priorities for co-ordination in capacity-building and scientific and technical co-operation (particularly information sharing and early warning systems for drought); and ways of strengthening organisations and institutions.

Regional activities may also be undertaken and affected Parties are to hold periodic co-ordination meetings. Parties may also set up a mechanism for such activities as exchanging information, co-ordinating activities, promoting co-operation, identifying needs for external co-operation, and following-up and evaluating the implementation of action programmes.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Nearly three-quarters of Latin America's drylands are moderately to severely desertified, and the Annex notes "the existence of broad expanses which are vulnerable and have been affected by desertification and/or drought." It mentions the frequent use

of unsustainable development practices in affected areas and describes the sharp drop in productivity, impoverishment and other severe social consequences caused by them.

The Annex provides a list of thematic issues that affected countries may take into account in developing their national strategies. These include eradicating poverty and improving the quality of life; achieving food security and sustainable development; rational and sustainable management and conservation of natural resources; conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and consideration of demographic issues.

They also include formulating and applying emergency plans to mitigate the effects of drought; strengthening and/or establishing information, evaluation and follow-up and early warning systems; developing, managing and efficiently using diverse sources of energy, including promoting alternative ones; "increasing capacities, education and public awareness, technical, scientific and technological co-operation and financial resources and mechanisms"; and establishing or strengthening institutional and legal frameworks to allow the Convention to be applied, which should aim at decentralising administration.

The Parties agree to establish and/or strengthen "national focal points" to co-ordinate action. They will hold periodic co-ordination meetings and set up a similar mechanism to the one outlined in the Asian Annex. Affected country Parties agree that they will, individually or jointly, undertake specific measures designed to disseminate and promote appropriate technologies and know-how.

The Northern Mediterranean

Developed countries suffer from desertification as well as developing ones. Almost two-thirds of Europe's drylands are moderately to severely affected. The problem is particularly acute on the Northern shores of the Mediterranean, where the rains are highly variable, droughts occur, the soil is poor and vulnerable, and steep slopes are prone to erosion. Frequent wildfires destroy forests, water is used unsustainably and traditional agriculture is in crisis. Urban growth, industry, tourism and irrigation are all concentrated in coastal areas, providing a foretaste of the problems most coastal developing countries are likely to face in the next century.

The Annex places an obligation on affected Parties to prepare National Action Programmes and sub-regional, regional and joint action programmes, as appropriate. These should be finalised as soon as possible. The Parties agree to survey the problem; evaluate past and present programmes to address it; designate bodies to be responsible for the action programmes; involve the local people; prepare technical and financial programmes; and develop and use means of monitoring and evaluating what is done. Affected developed country Parties of the region are not eligible to receive financial assistance under the Convention.

17 Follow-up

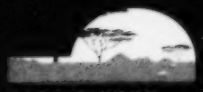
Any agreement is only as good as the action taken to implement it and the Convention to Combat Desertification is no exception. The 1977 Plan of Action failed adequately to tackle the problem, not primarily because of deficiencies in the measures that were agreed, but because they were insufficiently put into effect. The Convention tries to avoid this by setting out specific follow-up measures. But governments must ensure that they are implemented and that this unique chance to halt and reverse desertification is seized.

Countries should sign the Convention and move as speedily as possible to ratifying it. Even before ratification, affected countries can begin to put it into practice, on the basis of the resolution on urgent action for Africa. Usually the first step will be to designate or create a national co-ordinating body. This will act as a catalyst for preparing, implementing and evaluating the national action programme.

This national focal point should work out what institutional arrangements will be needed to implement the programme of action, what it will cost, and what the nation can spend. It should start a broad and thorough process of consultation both with its own nation's citizens and with donor countries and international organisations. It should ensure full participation by the people of the drylands and non-governmental organisations in assessing the strengths and weaknesses both of past and current programmes, and of the strategies proposed for implementing the new ones. And it should organise a national forum to formalise this interactive process and lead to setting up a consultative group with donors that would conclude partnership agreements.

Donor countries, in the meantime, are urged to mobilise resources and rearrange priorities so as to play their part in these partnerships and provide the substantial, timely and predictable finance that is needed. And, under the resolution for urgent action for Africa, Parties are invited to set up partnership agreements and prepare national and sub-regional action programmes without waiting for the treaty to come into force.

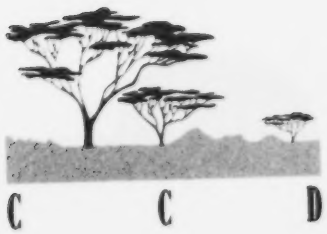
Encouraging signs of practical action emerged even as the Convention was signed in October 1994, when many African nations, other affected countries, and donors outlined practical steps that they were already taking to implement its provisions. If this can be continued there is real hope of at last tackling the age-old problem of desertification on an adequate scale. For it will only be beaten by action on the ground that is truly down to earth.



CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

The international community pressed for a treaty to tackle the growing physical and human crisis of desertification at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. After tough negotiations, the Convention to Combat Desertification - the first legally binding international agreement on the problem - was agreed in 1994. It breaks much new ground, pioneering a "bottom-up" approach that starts with the people actually affected by the crisis and replaces the concept of aid with one of partnership.

The Centre for Our Common Future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